

INSPECTION REPORT

HIGHFIELDS SCIENCE SPECIALIST SCHOOL

Wolverhampton

LEA area: Wolverhampton

Unique reference number: 104386

Head teacher : Mr A Schofield

Lead inspector: Grace Marriott

Dates of inspection: 31st January – 4th February 2005

Inspection number: 268827

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11-18
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1487
School address:	Boundary Way Penn Wolverhampton
Postcode:	WV4 4NT
Telephone number:	01902 556530
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs V Fitzmaurice
Date of previous inspection:	April 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Highfields is a large 11-18 comprehensive school in Wolverhampton. The school is oversubscribed. It has about 1500 students on roll including 270 in the sixth form. It is a specialist science school which takes its students from a wide area and from a wide variety of backgrounds. Around a third of the students have English as an additional language, though very few students are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is average. The proportion of students with special educational needs is also about average. The main needs are dyslexia, moderate learning difficulties and emotional and behavioural difficulties. The students join the school in Year 7 with broadly average knowledge skills and understanding. Similarly, in the sixth form the standards on entry are average overall, but the school accepts students on to advanced courses with more modest GCSE grades than in many schools.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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3242	Michael Newman	Team inspector	Science 11-16, Psychology 6 th form
3278 5	Win Allt	Team inspector	Information and Communication Technology 11-16 and Biology 6 th form
3313 5	Kim Ropek	Team inspector	Art 11-16 and 6 th form
3336 8	Val Greatrex	Team inspector	Design and Technology 11-16 and 6 th form
1780 8	Sue Orpin	Team inspector	Geography 11-16 and 6 th form
3349 8	Barry Bates	Team inspector	History 11-16 and 6 th form
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3137 2	Robert Hardwick	Team inspector	Religious Education 11-16
3323 5	Pauline Pitman	Team inspector	Special Educational Needs
2293 5	Peter Dacombe	Team inspector	Citizenship
3555	Carol Emery	Team inspector	Business Studies 6 th form
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Highfields is a good school which is providing students with a good all-round education. Students achieve well and teaching and learning are good. The head teacher provides very good leadership and is very strongly supported by the leadership team. They aim to provide the best possible education for all students. Parents and students are positive about the school and appreciate all that it offers. The school gives good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are

- GCSE results are well above average
- Students achieve well, overall, and do particularly well in English, art and design and technology
- Accommodation is poor and this is affecting provision in some areas and hindering further development
- Attitudes, behaviour and relationships are good, overall, and very good in the sixth form
- Standards and achievement in French are unsatisfactory at in Years 7 to 9
- In a minority of lessons, the teaching was not challenging enough and sometimes behaviour was not well managed
- Extension and enrichment activities are very good
- Links with other schools and colleges are very good, particularly through the science specialist school work

The school's improvement since the last inspection has been good. GCSE results have risen at a faster rate than nationally. The 5+ A*-C pass rate is around ten per cent higher than in 1999. Assessment has improved and is now being used effectively to track achievement and help raise standards. More students are taking sixth form courses and the range of courses has expanded. The school is now meeting statutory requirements for religious education throughout the school, though not for collective worship. Most subjects have improved.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2002	2003	2004	2004
GCSE/GNVQ examinations	A	A	A	A
*A/AS level and advanced VCE examinations	E	D	D	

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average
For Year 11, similar schools are those whose students achieved similar results at the end of Year 9.*

Achievement is good, overall, and very good in English in Years 7 to 9 and design technology and art in Years 10 and 11. In 2004, the results in the national tests in English, mathematics and science for students in Year 9 were above average overall and very much better than those of schools with a similar intake. The students did best in English. GCSE results were above average in terms of the proportion of students achieving 5 or more A* to C grades and well above average in terms of the point score¹. When GCSE results are compared with students' standard of work in Year 7, it is clear that this year group achieved very well. In Years 7 to 9, current standards are well above average in art and above average English, in mathematics, geography and religious education and ICT. Standards are average in other subjects, except French and music where they are below average. Standards are above average in most subjects in Years 10 and 11. In most years, girls do slightly better than boys. The results of students of Indian ethnic origin, particularly girls, have improved and

¹ Each grade at GCSE is worth a number of points, the average point score is calculated by dividing the total points for all subjects by the number of subjects taken.

there is little difference in the performance of students from different ethnic groups. A Level results are improving though they are still below average, this is good achievement since many students start advanced courses with relatively modest GCSE results.

Students have good attitudes and many have very good attitudes, particularly in the sixth form. They are willing to work, want to learn, listen to teachers and each other, and work well independently and together. The majority of students are also well behaved. The school strongly promotes students' all round personal development and it **provides very well overall for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development** though provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. Attendance is above average.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school is providing a good education.

Teaching is good overall and strongest in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. Lessons are well planned and assessment is used effectively to help students understand how to improve their work. In a few lessons the level of challenge was not high enough. The school's curriculum is good for Years 7 to 11 and the sixth form, though there are weaknesses in the provision of French and the implementation of citizenship is not yet complete in Years 10 and 11. The good range of courses and activities promote academic and personal development well. Further curriculum development is hindered by the impact of the poor accommodation, particularly for vocational work and in the sixth form. The school supports its students very well and provides very good guidance. The school works hard and successfully to build relationships with parents and the community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are good. The head teacher provides very good leadership and is very well supported by a strong leadership team. The governors know the school well and play an active role in its development. Most subjects are also well managed.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents think the school is providing a good education. Though they were aware of some areas of weakness, these were not sufficient to outweigh their approval of the overall quality of what the school provides. Students throughout the school think it gives them a good deal and appreciate what it has to offer them.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

To raise standards further, the most important things the school should do to improve are

- Continue the efforts to improve the quality of the accommodation
- Raise standards and improve achievement in French
- Improve the pace of work, the level of challenge and the management of some low-level disruptive behaviour in the lessons which were satisfactory rather than good

and to meet statutory requirements

- Provide a daily act of collective worship
- Complete the implementation of citizenship in Years 10 and 11

SIXTH FORM SUMMARY

OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form is providing a good cost-effective education, despite the limitations imposed by the poor quality of the accommodation. The consortium arrangements benefit the students and enable them to choose from a wide range of appropriate courses. Standards are average overall and this represents good achievement for students, many of whom start the sixth form with lower GCSE results than in many schools.

The main strength and weakness are

- The strengths apparent in the main school also apply to the sixth form
- The poor accommodation has a greater effect on sixth-form provision than it does in the main school as it affects facilities for private study as well as the curriculum

Quality and standards in subjects and courses of the curriculum

Judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses inspected in the sixth form are shown below. They are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Eleven subjects or courses were inspected and almost all other subjects were sampled. The teaching and learning in the sampled subjects were never less than satisfactory and much was good.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	English A Level: Good. Improving standards follow authoritative well-planned teaching which supports good achievement. Good leadership and management ensure very good assessment and support of students. Standards are average Punjabi A Level: Good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and students respond to high expectations.
Mathematics	Mathematics A Level: Good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and experience of the requirements of the examinations which is helping to raise standards. Achievement is raised through the use of good individual tuition. Standards are average.
Science	Biology A Level: Good. Standards are above average and students achieve well. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and plan well to meet students' needs. They provide students with good feedback on how to improve their work and achieve well. Psychology A Level: Satisfactory. Students are very positive. Standards are average. Teachers have good subject knowledge and there are examples of good teaching, but some teaching is too abstract.
Humanities	History A Level: Good. Well-planned programmes of study and thorough preparation for assessment criteria enable students to make good progress. Relationships and attitudes to learning are excellent and reflect students' confidence in their teachers. Geography A Level: Good. Teaching is good because of subject knowledge, focus on thinking skills, learning styles and developing independence. So achievement is good and standards rising. Sociology A Level: Good. Standards are improving and students are achieving well because of good guidance from teachers.
Technology (Food)	Design and Technology A Level: Very good. Standards are above average. Teaching is very good because students have good skills on which to build. Very good assessment ensures that students are kept on track. Achievement is very good.
Visual and performing arts and media	Art A Level: Very good. Very good teaching and learning leads to very good examination results. Enrichment projects with an external gallery serve to extend students' learning experiences.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
Business	Business Education A Level: Good. Standards are in line with national averages with good and some very good achievement. Relationships and attitudes to learning make a valuable contribution to good teaching and learning.

The curriculum areas are broadly common across all post-16 education and training. They do not necessarily correspond with subjects and courses taught by the school. Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement 'outstanding' in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to 'very weak'.

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Students have access to good advice, guidance and support. Assessment is used well to track students' performance and to identify students who are underachieving. The arrangements for individual mentoring are good and tutors are taking on an increasingly effective role in this, using a wide range of data.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The leadership and management of the sixth form are good. The school is playing an active role to develop management systems within the relatively new consortium. The school's well established system for the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and good work is now being done to extend these arrangements within the consortium. Subjects are well-managed. The school is very aware that the accommodation for the sixth form is poor and has taken steps to try to improve this, though the scope for this is limited.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students are appreciative of the support they receive both in terms of their learning and advice on their future direction. They enjoy being in the sixth form but are critical of the accommodation and facilities, though the deficiencies are not sufficient to deter them from staying into the sixth form.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Standards are above average, overall, at the end of Year 9 and well above average at GCSE. Students achieve well and the rate of improvement has been better than the national picture. Students' GCSE results are very good when compared with their starting point in Year 7. In the sixth form the results have been somewhat below average, but this is good achievement since the school accepts students on to advanced courses with lower GCSE grades than many schools.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are well above average and have improved since the last inspection
- Results in the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 are very much better than the national results
- Students are achieving well
- Standards in French and music are not high enough in Years 7 to 9
- The results of girls of Indian ethnic origin have improved considerably since the last inspection
- Students with special educational needs achieve well

Commentary

1. Students achieve well at all stages in the school. They join the school in Year 7 with broadly average knowledge skills and understanding in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. In other subjects standards on entry are more variable, depending very much on their experience in primary school.
2. Results in the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 are above average and they have been improving at a faster rate than the national results. The 2004 results, though not as good as 2003 in terms of the proportion of students achieving Level 5 or better, nonetheless represent very good achievement because the students started from a lower base than the previous year group. Results were highest in English and lowest in science, though in all three subjects the students did much better than those in schools which had a similar intake in Year 7.
3. Current standards in Years 7 to 9 are above average, overall and students are achieving well. In the core subjects, standards in English and mathematics are above average and in science they are average. In other subjects, students achieve particularly well in art and ICT. In French their achievement is unsatisfactory mainly because expectations for what they can achieve are not high enough.
4. GCSE results have improved by around ten per cent since the last inspection. At GCSE in 2004, students achieved results which were well above the national average overall. In the core subjects of English, mathematics and science the proportion of students achieving an A* to C pass was broadly in line with the national average. Results in almost all subjects were better than the national results. This represents good achievement from students whose standards on entry to the school were average. The results of students from ethnic minorities, particularly girls of Indian origin, have improved significantly. In art, English literature, geography, design and technology, computer studies, physical education, Spanish and religious education results were better than the national average. In PE, results were well above average. Overall, when compared with their other subjects, both boys and girls did best in design and technology and ICT.
5. Current standards in Years 10 and 11 are above average. Students continue to achieve very well in art and also achieve very well in design and technology (both food and resistant materials) and GCSE physical education. Standards in French are better than in Years 7 to 9 and the relatively small number of students who choose to continue to study French achieve well.
6. Students with special educational needs make progress and achieve as well as other students. In the small group literacy lessons in Years 7 to 9, they make very good progress towards targets on their individual action plans. Scrutiny of students' exercise books reveal that they improve the

presentation of their work, their spelling accuracy and their reading comprehension during Years 7 and 8 as a result of very good quality individualised teaching and learning programmes. They understand what they need to do to improve and are offered opportunities to discuss their work and set themselves targets for improvement. Students with a statement of special educational needs make very good progress towards targets on their individual action plans and towards objectives on their statement. In technology, Year 11 students benefited from good quality worksheets which had been specifically modified to meet their needs and this effectively promoted learning and achievement. The academic and social achievement of students participating in Club 2000, a Key Stage 4 vocational course, is good.

Sixth form

Main strengths

- The good achievement seen in Years 7 to 11 continues in the sixth form
- Current standards in art, biology and design and technology are above average

Commentary

7. Students join the sixth form with relatively modest GCSE results as the school is prepared to allow them to start courses with lower grades than many schools. A Level results are improving, though the 2004 results were still below average. Standards in art and biology were above average. Both boys and girls did better in these subjects than their other subjects and they did least well in mathematics. In some subjects, A Level results have varied considerably from year to year, but this is often the effect of relatively small group sizes where the results of one or two students can have a disproportionate effect on percentages.
8. Current standards in the sixth form are now broadly average and students are achieving well. Eleven subjects were inspected in depth and most other subjects were sampled. In the focus subjects, achievement was never less than satisfactory and it was very good in art and design and technology and on the advanced vocational business course. Students were achieving well in English, Punjabi, geography, sociology, biology and mathematics and business studies. In psychology, achievement was satisfactory. In the sampled subjects achievement was at least satisfactory and often good.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2004

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34.2 (37.7)	n/a (33.4)
mathematics	35.8 (36.6)	n/a (35.4)
science	33.8 (34.5)	n/a (33.6)

There were students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for 2003.

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ and equivalent examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2004

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	62 (66)	52 (52)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	98 (97)	89 (88)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (97)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	385.1	340.3

There were 237 students in the year group. The capped average point score is based on students' best eight results. Figures in brackets are for 2003.

Sixth form

Standards in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2004

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	90.9 (91.2)	89.4 (92.6)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	23.6 (26.9)	32.6 (35.3)
Average point score per pupil	203.7(218.4)	258.2 (263.3)

There were 101 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for 2003.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attitudes, behaviour and attendance are good, ensuring that all students have every chance of doing well. Punctuality is satisfactory. The school fosters students' personal qualities very well overall, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students enjoy work that stimulates interest in a subject because they know they are here to learn and want to do well
- Many students behave very well in and out of lessons; almost all students listen well and do as they are asked when given the chance to do work that gives them a taste of success
- The school is a civilised, harmonious place where students' all round development is nurtured strongly although poor accommodation makes it hard to foster the very best behaviour and maturity
- Students like school, as very good working relationships with teachers encourage them to try hard

Commentary

9. The school works hard to fulfil its belief that 'every child can be successful' through positive example and encouragement to create a friendly, purposeful working atmosphere where 'education is enjoyable'. Students know that learning is at the heart of school life, so the emphasis on rewards for trying hard and not settling for second best ensures that they are keen to rise to the challenges set. The best lessons reflect this very well. For example, in a Year 7 art class, students were highly motivated by a very clear, step-by-step demonstration of the skill needed to use a craft knife deftly to cut cardboard shapes and build up contours creatively to enhance imaginatively-designed masks.
10. Staff, led particularly well by the head teacher and senior leadership team, set a very good example of smiling, courteous behaviour which students mirror. They learn quickly what is expected, even if they have not been used to positive codes of self-discipline, warmth and respect for others before. As most students of all ages, abilities and backgrounds behave very well most of the time, the school is calm and orderly. However, a few students show frustration and lose interest in lessons when teaching demands too little or too much of them. Sometimes it results in restlessness and disruption to their own and others' learning. This does not happen when activities are devised carefully to give all students enough interesting work to do at just the right level of difficulty. Even individuals with particular behavioural difficulties or learning needs respond very well when work is explained clearly and they can see that they will be able to cope with it. One such pupil was enthralled by how chance throws of a dice resulted in Wolverhampton Wanderers 'climbing up the league table', which triggered much experimenting and a very good grasp of the idea of probability. Exclusion rates are low because very effective checks to identify any patterns of

misbehaviour and very good teamwork for dealing consistently with problems reduce the need to exclude students.

Ethnic background of students

Categories used in the annual school census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other white background
Mixed – white and black Caribbean
Mixed – white and black African
Mixed – white and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British – Indian
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or black British – Caribbean
Black or black British – African
Black or black British – any other black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
673	18	
8		
14	2	
54	9	
1		
19		
16	1	
550	18	
50	2	
8		
3		
52		
3		
10	1	
4		
2		
20		

The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of students excluded.

11. Within effective daily routines and the good-natured way in which staff and students interact, the school ensures that students' personal qualities can flourish. It has high expectations of regular attendance, which families understand and meet well. Students try hard to be punctual but problems with late-running buses and lack of room to move round the school mean that they do not always arrive at school or lessons promptly, even if they generally understand the importance of punctuality.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.2	School data	0.2
National data	6.9	National data	1.1

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

12. The school buildings show clear signs of wear and tear. As a pupil said “the north block ceiling and various other parts of the school look uninviting as the paint is peeling and some of the flooring is ripped”. Many others echoed this and emphasised the lack of space and

inadequate facilities. In specific places, every effort has been made to encourage students to want to be there and to feel valued. Enticing art rooms are full of awe-inspiring work students have produced. The learning support centre has a wonderful setting with just the right level of stimulation aided by lively displays of good work and well-chosen posters. It promotes a sense of worth within a calm learning environment. Elsewhere not much has been done to brighten corridor walls with stimulating, colourful displays to compensate for a bleak environment. This spoils the school's great efforts to generate love of learning and personal fulfilment.

13. Students like “the friendly attitude between the staff and students where teaching quality and behaviour are maintained”. They know that it is safe to take a risk with a tricky problem, suggest an answer and not fear the consequences of being wrong. Students work together very well in pairs and groups. They show respect for others and have a very clear understanding of right and wrong. When given the chance to reflect on an inspiring story or piece of music, they can be moved by the experience, although spiritual awareness is less highly developed than other personal qualities.
14. Students with special educational needs and emotional and behavioural difficulties consistently comment that they enjoy attending additional literacy or social development courses, have benefited from available support and feel safe and comfortable within the school. They are fully included in the life of the school and their views are listened to. Year 8 students were invited to create a suggestion sheet for teachers to support them to become effective learners.

Sixth form

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good attitudes and behaviour in the sixth form minimise the problems of moving from site to site and the negative effects of lack of study space and the often dreary working environment
- As in the main school, students’ personal development is promoted strongly, helped by a rich range of very good opportunities made possible through links with other schools and organisations

Commentary

15. Students appreciate what the school does for them and the opportunities offered on site and extended so well through the consortium. They have very good attitudes to learning and behave very well, showing high levels of maturity. They welcome the chance to study a mix of subjects they think they will enjoy, rather than the typical range available within the usual tight constraints of staffing and timetables. Nevertheless, they criticise, justifiably, unreliable transport, which means they miss all or part of lessons if minibuses do not turn up on time or at all and the lack of proper study facilities. Understandably, they plead for “a more suitable 6th form common room as we have no area for ourselves – all other years do”. They are expected to tolerate less than ideal working conditions, which they do with good humour, generally. For those unable to work in specialist subject rooms, it is very frustrating to be required to spend so much time in supervised private study in a gloomy hall with no access to all the additional resources required for first-rate learning. Students’ maturity, sense of responsibility and determination to do well ensure that achievement is less likely to be affected badly by poor access to computers and suitable books, or time spent travelling between sites. They attend well and their punctuality, in difficult circumstances, is satisfactory.
16. The school and its partners work very hard to enrich students’ experiences, raise their aspirations and boost expectations of what they can achieve. They do this through visits, such as those to Oxford, Birmingham and Aberystwyth universities, workshops, and imaginative programmes for gifted and talented students, as well as subject-specific activities for everyone. Special relationships with local universities are of great benefit to students, including that with Wolverhampton, which gives preferential entry to strong candidates from the school and use of some study facilities. Students gain hugely from experiences fostered by projects such as that with Wolverhampton art gallery. A group of Year 12 art students has a unique opportunity to design three stunning glass panels for a special room in the exciting, remodelled gallery, to be made by a professional glass designer and put in place for posterity.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school is providing a good education despite the limitations of the accommodation. Teaching and learning are good. The curriculum provides students with many opportunities and students are very well cared for and supported.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good, overall, and slightly stronger in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. Almost all teaching was satisfactory or better and over two thirds was good or very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have good knowledge and are enthusiastic about their subjects
- Well-structured lessons enable students to move from simple to more complex tasks
- Teachers know students' strengths and weaknesses and give them good feedback in lessons
- Teachers use a wide variety of teaching methods which help to motivate and encourage students to work and learn well
- In a few lessons the level of challenge, though satisfactory, was not as good as it could have been
- Assessment is used well to give students good information on how to improve
- Occasionally, teachers were not firm enough in dealing with minor misbehaviour
- A few lessons were too teacher-dominated and students were not clear enough about what they were doing and why

Commentary

17. In the school as a whole, over two thirds of the teaching was graded good or better and in Years 10 to 13 this rose to around three-quarters. There was very little unsatisfactory teaching. The good quality of teaching is a very significant factor in the success of students.
18. In the good and very good lessons, teachers organised their classes well and the routines promoted good behaviour and attitudes so that all students were able to learn. They used their good subject knowledge well. Demonstrations, practical work, explanations, group discussion, and in some lessons, ICT, were all used in different ways to motivate students to enjoy learning. The use of ICT is developing well and interactive white boards which, when used effectively, motivate and increase confidence and promote learning. For example, students with special educational needs enjoyed an interactive computer-based typing challenge which raised their accuracy level.
19. The good and very good lessons had a clear structure which moved students' learning on from simple to complex tasks in a logical progression which they fully understood. Teachers explained the objectives of the lesson clearly at the start and reviewed these at the end of the lesson, so that students were clear about what was expected of them and what they had achieved. A good variety of tasks helped to motivate students and keep lessons interesting. Teachers have a good understanding of individual needs and plan work accordingly. For example, in a lower-ability mathematics set, students achieved because the teacher had a very good relationship with the students that allowed one-to-one tuition within the lesson to be effective.
20. Some of the features of the good and very good lessons were present in the satisfactory lessons, but in these lessons the pace tended to be slower and the level of challenge was not as well matched to the range of needs in the class. At times it was too easy, both for lower and higher-attaining students and sometimes a few teachers found it difficult to manage low level misbehaviour. On a few occasions, teachers talked for too long and did not give students enough opportunities to contribute or think for themselves.
21. The teaching of students with special educational needs is good. Very good early identification and assessment procedures enable the learning support department to target individual needs, including those with specific learning difficulties, support them effectively through a range of well- planned and resourced literacy courses. With parental agreement, students are withdrawn from one modern

foreign language, where the teaching of phonics and key subject vocabulary provides students with the building blocks for literacy. Learning support assistants work as a team, and are committed to meeting the needs of targeted students. They are linked to departments in order to develop subject expertise. This works particularly well in religious education.

22. Across the school, good work has been done to develop assessment and this is being used effectively to help students to improve their work. Students generally know how well they are doing and what their targets are. Marking is thorough and gives students good guidance. Teachers are using assessment data well when planning work and, in almost all departments, assessment judgements are accurate and reliable.

Sixth form

Main strengths and weaknesses

- These are the same as for the school as a whole except for the comment on the management of behaviour which is very good in the sixth form

Commentary

23. The strengths evident in Years 7 to 11 are also evident in the sixth form. Here, most teachers have very good subject knowledge and a real enthusiasm for their subjects which they are keen to share with their students. They plan well to build on what students already know, which helps to build up their confidence. Questioning is used well to establish what students have achieved and to encourage them to develop their ideas further. As is the main school, assessment is used effectively to provide guidance and support.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 203 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (0.5%)	44 (22%)	95 (47%)	55 (27%)	6 (2.5%)	1 (0.5%)	0%

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

The curriculum

The curriculum is good. The school provides a good range of courses and activities which promote academic and personal development well. Further curriculum development is hindered by the poor accommodation. Extra-curricular provision is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides a broad and balanced range of experiences and makes every effort to minimise the adverse effects of very limited and poor quality accommodation
- Although statutory requirements are generally met, citizenship in Years 10 and 11 is not yet fully implemented and a daily act of collective worship is not fully provided
- Opportunities for enrichment are very good and student participation in extra-curricular activities high
- Geography, art and design, and English for Years 7, 8 and 9 are planned very well but provision in French for Years 7, 8 and 9, and the curriculum planned for music are unsatisfactory
- New ideas for the curriculum are helping to make learning more interesting and relevant for students and the new status of Science Specialist School is having a positive impact on the curriculum

Commentary

24. In Years 7 to 9, students receive a very balanced coverage of English language and literature which are interrelated well through careful planning. The curriculum for mathematics is enhanced through the provision of extra classes particularly to help Years 9 and 11. The choice of Examination Boards is carefully selected to ensure that students can

study a course that fully meets their needs. Science has particularly benefited from the school's new status as a Specialist School and the study of double award science has benefited students' achievement. Geography provides a very good blend of human and physical geography, places in the United Kingdom and more distant places, together with a strong emphasis on students learning to use maps, field work and develop their skills of investigation. In history, good planning ensures that students learn to use their skills of research effectively, while making gains in factual knowledge and understanding. Students in Years 8 and 9 are able to study French and Spanish, while the range of opportunities in PE is as extensive as it can be within the limits of facilities available.

25. The school timetable ensures that taught lesson time meets the nationally recommended figure of 25 hours. However, although there are well-planned developments, the programmes of study for citizenship are not yet fully covered in Years 10 and 11. In music, insufficient account has been taken of recent changes to the National Curriculum, and students' skills in ICT are not used sufficiently to help them learn. Although a few classes are shared between two teachers, for example in geography, the good quality planning and efficient teamwork between teachers mean that the achievement of students is not adversely affected. Despite the constraints of accommodation, the timetable is satisfactory and minimises the number of difficulties. However, although the accommodation limits the number of assemblies, the school does not effectively offer an alternative for daily collective worship.
26. Students in Years 10 and 11 are offered a wide range of GCSE courses and there are newly- developed courses established, which some students now follow, for example vocational studies such as health and social care. Environmental science, which is now being studied by Year 10, is a development from the school's recent Science Specialist School status. The programme of work-related learning is developing in a satisfactory way and there are good plans for the future. The school has successfully managed to provide a programme of work-related learning so that lessons for the students involved, and others, are not disrupted.
27. The school is effectively developing new ideas for increasing flexibility in provision and for meeting the students' differing range of needs. As part of becoming a Science Specialist School, good curricular links with other schools have been developed, including Primary Schools, which ease the transfer of students between schools, and widen the range of possible future courses in Years 10 and 11 through consortium arrangements similar to those currently used in the sixth form.
28. The curriculum for students with special educational needs is good. In Years 10 and 11 lower-achieving students have the option of accessing Club 2000 (an entry level vocational course) offering well-designed challenges within a supportive learning environment, good work placement programmes, basic literacy and numeracy and a choice of GCSE courses. Discussions with Year 10 and 11 students revealed that they have been supported throughout Key Stage 3 by very good learning support assistants and the Connexions Service. However, they feel they would like more support for GCSE course work. Greater tracking and analysis of achievement for students with special educational needs in Years 10 and 11 would inform support needs and raise expectations for students with additional learning needs and those at risk of underachievement. The Student Support Centre opened in February 2001 and is a well-managed resource. It is now piloting direct referrals to the manager for students in Years 7 to 9 at risk of underachievement or exclusion. It provides a calm, purposeful learning environment where disaffected students are well supported. The students benefit from a range of social and academic curricular activities and some very good support from an educational social worker, learning mentors and learning partners from two local churches.
29. The programme for personal, social, and health education is provided in a satisfactory way and includes drug abuse, sex and careers education. The programme is co-ordinated well

although teaching in tutorial time is variable. In the best lessons, students gain much from considering others' views and debating what they believe and why.

30. The range and variety of extra-curricular activities is very good and a very high number of students participate before school, at lunchtime and after school. The commitment of staff to providing these opportunities is outstanding. A very good variety of activities for gifted and talented students is very well attended and adds significantly to their achievement. There are opportunities in all subjects, including orchestra, mathematics puzzles and problem solving, ICT, revision and homework clubs. Additional activities include days, such as Chemistry Challenge, dance days, jazz workshops, mathematics lectures, and residential and holiday programmes, such as trips abroad, skiing, murder mystery weekends and outdoor adventure trips. The success of all enrichment activities is carefully monitored and evaluated.
31. The accommodation at the school is poor because there are too few rooms that can be used as classrooms, so additional spaces that are unsuitable, such as the rooms below the stage have to be used. Around the school, the corridors and staircases are narrow and restrict the movement of students. In order to ease congestion the school has introduced a one-way system that successfully achieves this, but at times leads to the lateness of some students because they have had to take a more indirect route between rooms. The library space is unsatisfactory for the large number of students it needs to serve. It is cramped and generally has insufficient space, books available and access to internet for students. There is also insufficient access to the school and classrooms for those with disabilities. As a consequence of the accommodation, the school is limited in the range of courses that it can offer, for example in PE, and in the ways in which can develop and improve the curriculum. However, resources in most areas are adequate.
32. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The provision for ICT in Years 10 and 11 now meets requirements and the enrichment activities have improved.

Sixth form

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staying-on rates and retention are good
- Access to a wide range of advanced courses through the consortium arrangements
- Good enrichment opportunities
- Poor accommodation for independent study, for some subjects and inadequate social facilities

Commentary

33. The growth of numbers in the sixth form has sustained a wide range of advanced courses. Departments offer A/S and A2 courses and some advanced vocational course such as in business studies. Small numbers in some groups particularly in Year 13 affect the quality of learning as for example in performing arts. The curriculum offered is in general well planned, building on the schemes of work at GCSE.
34. The school has been innovative in seeking to extend opportunities. Good examples are a joint staffing appointment with another school to introduce psychology and twilight sessions to offer law. Curriculum choices have been significantly improved by the involvement of the school in the Wolverhampton 14-19 Pathfinder Project. As part of a four school consortium, Highfields is able to share courses which could have been uneconomic, for example French which is now offered at a consortium school and to offer additional courses such as media studies and dance. Co-ordination of timetables and the provision of minibuses facilitate the movement of students between sites. Overall, the school has been effective in tailoring the curriculum to both need and demand. This is having a positive effect on student recruitment and achievement.

35. Regular planning meetings between staff in the consortium have addressed issues affecting the quality of provision for students studying on more than one site. These include entry requirements, application processes, monitoring of attendance and progress and the quality of teaching and guidance. Good progress has been made but more work is required to guarantee standards of provision.
36. The school has a very limited offer of lower level courses, though it has developed a successful applied science course with the University of Wolverhampton. However, students have access to wider opportunities in other schools in the consortium. The school's guidance programme encourages students to move schools if it is in their interests to do so. The school's curriculum planning incorporates continuity with the work-related curriculum in Years 10 and 11.
37. An extensive enrichment programme is offered on a Wednesday afternoon utilising opportunities across the consortium. Astronomy, offered at the City Learning Centre, is an example of the breadth which has been made possible. The school's PSHE programme is extended into the sixth form. Preparation for higher education is thorough. For example a local selective school has given interview preparation to Oxbridge candidates. Assemblies are held twice a week and religious education is meeting statutory requirements. PE is available through the enrichment programme but take up is limited.
38. Poor accommodation has an adverse impact on learning in some subjects such as performing arts and business studies. The lack of facilities inhibits opportunities for private study. Access to ICT facilities are also very limited and the growth of student numbers has exacerbated the inadequacy of resources in the library. The Wolverhampton Consortium is developing a *Virtual Workspace* which should aid independent study especially for students who have internet access from home. The social facilities are insufficient for the numbers now in the sixth form.
39. The school has taken a measured approach to curriculum development. Above all it seeks to open up the best opportunities for its students. Its active involvement in the Wolverhampton Consortium is appreciated by its partners. Good use is being made of the specialisms of the local specialist schools. Ambitious plans to harmonise subject specifications and to extend the curriculum offer demonstrate the capacity for further improvement.

Care, guidance and support

The school takes very good care of its students, ensuring that guidance and support are of high quality so everyone has every chance of success. Students are consulted well and their views are taken seriously. Improvement in quality of care since the last inspection has been good.

Main strengths

- A very strong network of support based on very good relationships and use of information ensures that students' different needs are identified and individuals are very well known to staff
- Very good academic and personal advice and guidance is tailored to students' individual needs and based securely on consistent use of rewards and sanctions
- Very good induction arrangements help students to settle very well
- Students have good opportunities to make their views known and to influence school life
- Students value the help they are given and find it useful

Commentary

40. Staff and students know that the school believes that everyone in the school community is important and deserves support. As a result, students are full of praise for the high quality

care received and staff feel valued. "I like the teachers because they are nice and helpful to students with homework problems and other problems to do with school." The consistency with which staff keep track of how well students are doing in subjects, attendance levels and other achievements, is a key factor in this. Very careful checks and use of data help staff to get to know students very well through patterns that highlight concern or merit praise, which are followed up with carefully targeted advice or rewards. "Subject teachers and teachers in general often go out of their way to give advice on how to improve work." This creates a climate in which students can ask for help and have confidence in the advice given. Learning mentors make a real difference to the range of support available to students because they, too, check on how individuals cope in class and the factors that speed up or slow down their progress. It ensures that they can fine-tune the work they set particular students and the precise help they give.

41. The school takes very good care to ensure that arrangements for child protection are fully in place. It deals very carefully with matters of health and safety, as required, particularly as the accommodation is barely fit for purpose in places and often shabby, in spite of efforts the school makes to maintain it well.
42. Staff from local primary schools and parents are very pleased with all the work the school does to help students feel confident about moving to secondary school. It makes very good use of a variety of sample lessons within a well thought through induction programme to make transfer from primary school easy. Year 7 students like the buddy system, which means that they can turn to an older pupil for help if needed.
43. The school often asks people what they think of particular initiatives, including the Year 7 induction programme and acts on their suggestions for improvement. It expects students to air their views, too, either formally through the active school council, or informally in everyday conversation with staff. The head teacher and other senior staff are easy to find during the day so ideas are readily exchanged. For example, the head teacher enjoys talking to students during his duty in the dining hall at lunchtime. This fosters a strong sense of community within which everyone's views count and are treated with respect.
44. The care of students with additional academic and social needs is good. The learning support department communicates the individual needs of its students through a useful inclusion folder available to all departments. All departments ensure that targets completed on the planning and review day reflect the literacy targets on students' individual action plans. They are cared for and supported through an increasing network of business links, outside agents and teaching and non-teaching colleagues within the school. An education social worker provides invaluable support, behaviour management and counselling for students. This work is complemented by learning mentors, who support achievement and reintegration of students with emotional or behavioural needs, career support from Connexions and support for attendance through the education welfare officer. There are social and emotional programmes and support delivered through *Spurgeons*, the youth offending team, the social inclusion project (SIPS) and *Excellence in Cities*.
45. Outside agencies are involved well during the annual review process for statemented students. The development of personalised learning programmes for students with motor control difficulties and speech and language needs complement the work of the learning support department in maximising learning opportunities and care of students with special educational needs. The school has only recently been allocated an educational psychologist due to staffing issues within the local authority. The new appointment means that the school and the educational psychologist can plan together to meet the needs of students with additional needs.

Sixth form

Main strengths and weaknesses are the same as for the school as a whole.

Commentary

46. In the sixth form, the care systems work as well as they do in the main school and students are involved well in voicing opinions about improvements to school life. The school's very good support systems are used equally well in the sixth form to ensure that students know exactly what they need to do to stay on track with their studies. Relationships with staff are very constructive so students feel comfortable about asking for any help they need, subject by subject. The very helpful network of contacts fostered by the consortium, including those with Connexions and local colleges, underpin effective guidance on what to do next. Sometimes individuals find it hard to pick up all the information they need because of the lack of a thriving, well-resourced sixth-form base on site and the travelling they have to do. Their dependence on other students to pass on information can be frustrating: "information about open days or universities, or privileges such as NUS or other advantage cards should be (given directly) to us." Otherwise, students are very appreciative of the way they are encouraged and the extent to which the school listens to and does something about their concerns.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has a good, effective partnership with parents and very good links with the immediate and wider community, including other schools and colleges. Links are stronger than at the last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses in the main school and sixth form

- Efforts to build good working relationships with parents ensure that home-school partnership supports students' achievements successfully
- Communication with parents is good, although reports do not set out useful targets clearly enough
- Very good links involving partner schools within the specialist school group provide a wealth of extra teaching and learning opportunities for all those involved
- Links with the wider community are very successful in raising aspirations and offering a rich range of additional experiences, particular to older students and sixth form students

Commentary

47. Parents think the school is doing a good job, with very good arrangements to settle in new students, high expectations, good teaching that results in good progress, and happy students. As a result and with the welcome they receive, parents feel comfortable about approaching the school with any concerns or suggestions. The inspection confirmed parents' positive assessment. Year group teams take particular care to build good relationships with parents so that any problems at home or school that might affect behaviour and progress are dealt with promptly and constructively, including any instances of bullying on or off site. Standards of behaviour are higher than parents thought and the range of extra-curricular activities on offer is better, although for some students access to off-site activities is difficult. Rightly, parents are pleased with the school's considerable efforts to support those with special educational needs or problems with self-discipline and some lessons.
48. The school is committed to working with parents to ensure that a shared, active interest in children's learning helps students to achieve all they can. It expects parents to come in to discuss their children's work and progress and stay in touch when problems arise. Review and target-setting days are very well attended and compensate for the fact that the word-processed progress review sheets are not particularly user-friendly, nor are targets always specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely. Regular contact through form and year tutors and heads of year ensures that good dialogue irons out problems to do with absences or homework quickly. Pastoral teams also ensure that families receive much good news, such as pupil commendations for well-kept homework organisers, special effort or good work. Newsletters provide lively information. Open-house afternoons enable parents to drop in to talk to the head teacher. These factors underpin good working relationships between home and school.
49. Parents of students with special educational needs are consulted over the reviews and are provided with opportunities to record views about the achievements made. Students on the special needs register are monitored closely with clear entry and exit criteria. For example, students entering the school in Year 7 on School Action or School Action Plus are removed from the register when they have made sufficient progress
50. The school's specialist status has resulted in very strong links with partner schools for curriculum development and specialist teaching in mathematics and science. Year 5 students work enthusiastically in the school's laboratories in the summer term and older primary students benefit from interesting bridging units that prepare them thoughtfully for secondary school work. The very good transition is helped by primary staff, who work in the school as Year 7 start the second part of the bridging project. Staff in partner schools are highly complimentary about first-rate work in mathematics, tailored to their needs.
51. Collaboration with many other schools and colleges through varied partnerships, including the post-16 consortium, allow students access to a far wider range of courses and exciting extra-curricular activities than the school could offer alone. This, plus a leading role among local schools in provision for gifted and talented students, helps to raise awareness of opportunities available to young adults and boost the number of those aspiring to skilled training and higher education after school. The school encourages students to aim high and, each year has a good number who are first in their family to enter university.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are good. The head teacher provides very good leadership and is very well supported by the senior leadership team. Governance is good. The governors are knowledgeable about the school's strengths and weaknesses and are actively involved in its development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The head teacher, actively supported by a very strong senior team, provides very good leadership and vision for the development of the school
- Systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of departments and year teams are very thorough
- The governors provide good support to the school, actively support its inclusive approach and do their best to improve the accommodation
- There is a culture of open and reflective self-evaluation which leads to accurate identification of the school's main strengths and weaknesses
- Management in departments is good overall, but there are weaknesses in a few subjects

Commentary

52. The head teacher has led the school very well since the last inspection. Examination results have improved and the school has gained specialist school status. He has the continued energy and enthusiasm to see the school develop further and is a driving force behind the school's inclusive ethos. He has a very clear vision of how both academic and pastoral teams should work together to improve students' achievement. He is assisted very effectively by a strong senior leadership team who share his vision and sense of purpose. The head teacher and other senior staff have a highly visible presence around the school, consistently reinforcing expectations of good behaviour and managing pupil movement around the narrow corridors. Through this very practical approach to management they have a very good understanding of what is going on in the school on a day-to-day basis. The head teacher also takes personal charge of a programme of mentoring for students in Years 11 and 13 whose mock examination results were below expectations, helping to keep him in close contact with teaching and learning in the school.
53. Systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of departments and year teams are very thorough. Detailed information about the performance of students in tests and examinations is used to evaluate the performance of the school and to identify strengths and any areas for concern. Governors make good use of this information to monitor standards. Each member of the senior leadership team is responsible for a group of subject departments and year groups and has regular meetings with the leaders of those teams. Meetings are carefully structured with a clear focus on teaching and learning. This is helping senior managers to gain a clearer and more detailed understanding of what is happening in the classroom and is also enabling them to be more responsive to initiatives and concerns raised by teachers. For example, it has led to improvements in behaviour management strategies.
54. The governors provide good support to the school. They are well aware that the school buildings need improvement and have worked hard to do what they can within their financial resources. They have also acted as tireless advocates for a completely new school, meeting frequently with the local education authority. They are well aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are ready to question school leaders about how improvements will be brought about. Governors are very supportive of the inclusive ethos of the school and show an interest in the progress and personal development of students of all abilities. This commitment is shown in the early warning meetings where students who are

at risk of exclusion are invited with their parents to meet governors to discuss how this sanction might be avoided.

55. The school has developed good self-evaluation systems and in its documentation has shown that it is well aware of its strengths and has also identified where improvements need to be made. The inspection team closely agree with the school's own analysis, showing that these systems are effective.

56. Middle managers are doing a good job in most areas. Leadership and management is very good in English, design and technology and in art, making a significant contribution to the high standards there. In modern languages, staff absence has affected standards, although the school has made significant efforts to support the department and to minimise the effects on students. In addition, the use of French and Spanish in the classroom by teachers has not been developed with sufficient consistency. In music, monitoring procedures have not identified that there is not enough challenge in the teaching, to match up with the expectations of the national curriculum. The management of Urdu and Punjabi remains unsatisfactory because there are no suitable arrangements for the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning. There has been no improvement in this situation since the last inspection.
57. The leadership and management of special educational needs are very good. This has helped to create an ethos of high expectation and rigour within learning support. This has improved the quality of provision and outcomes for students working within the department. An impressive continuing professional development record is in place for teaching and non-teaching staff. colleagues including ICT training, access to degrees and vocational courses. There is induction for new teachers and whole-school training days on teaching and learning, including strategies for meeting the needs of students with special educational needs.
58. The Student Support Centre is well led and managed. The manager analyses referrals to determine trouble spots, supports students to re-engage with the curriculum and manages an increasing number of behaviour programmes, classroom mentoring for students working below National Curriculum expectations. For example, they are piloting a well-planned *Excellence in Cities* and *Youth Offending Team* (YOTS) course designed to support personal, social and health development of students referred to the Centre. An inclusion co-ordinator has recently been appointed, but as yet this role is underdeveloped within the school.
59. The school recognises its access duties outlined within the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act. Although the school can accommodate some students with disabilities, it is not accessible to wheelchair users due to the narrowness of corridors and staircases. However, the new Environmental Centre will be fully accessible.

Sixth form

60. Participation in the local sixth-form consortium, set up two years ago, has brought advantages to Highfields students because they are now able to choose from a far wider range of courses, both at advanced and at intermediate level. There are also some fifty students from other schools who attend Highfields for one or more of their sixth-form courses, benefiting in areas where the school has particular skills and expertise. These consortium arrangements help to improve the cost-effectiveness of sixth-form provision.
61. Within individual subjects, the quality of leadership and management is good. In design technology and in art it is very good, making a significant contribution to the high standards achieved. Assessment is used well to track students' performance and to identify students who look likely to under-achieve in their final examinations. There are good arrangements to mentor students individually, especially after the mock examinations. The head teacher plays a leading role here, but tutors are also being trained to take on more of this work as academic mentors and to use additional sources of data to monitor student progress.
62. The consortium arrangements for the school are relatively new and Highfields is now playing an active role to develop management systems. For example, systems for monitoring attendance are being improved, both for students who attend courses at other centres and also for students from elsewhere who attend Highfields. The school has a well-established system for the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and good work is now being done to extend these arrangements within the consortium.

63. Social and private study facilities for the sixth form are inadequate. The school is well aware of this and has taken steps to try and mitigate the effects of the overall poor accommodation. For example, in art an area of the room has been set aside for the sixth form, with small individual work areas where students can work individually even when another class is in the room. In geography, one room has been modified to allow for the installation of a suite of computers which are available for sixth formers studying the subject. Despite these efforts, the overall provision of study facilities remains unsatisfactory, meaning that many students are returning home to work during the school day. Some provision is available in the main school hall, but this is far from ideal. Sixth formers are not well provided for either, in terms of social facilities.

Financial management

64. Financial management is good. It is well controlled and effective. The school's budget is set with detailed reference to priorities identified in the school improvement plan and the curriculum plan. Wide consultation takes place and the governing body is kept informed and invited to challenge proposals put forward by the senior leadership of the school. Systems for monitoring spending are effective and the principles of best value in financial management are adhered to. The school's financial management is audited regularly by the local authority and action plans are drawn up and approved by the governing body to address recommendations. Benchmarking information is used effectively to compare spending patterns with those of similar schools and governors are aware of the outcomes. The balance carried forward at first sight appears high. However, over half the amount shown (£249,611) has been earmarked for building improvements and refurbishments associated with the school's specialist science college status. This has been agreed by the governing body and is confirmed in the approved minutes of a governing body meeting. The remaining balance carried forward is reasonable for a school of this size.

Financial information for the Year April 2003 to 2004

Income and Expenditure	(£)	Balances	(£)
Total income	5,060,381	Balances from previous year	98,547
Total expenditure	4,746,732	Balances carried forward to the next year	412,196
Expenditure per pupil	3,249		

OTHER SPECIFIED AREAS

Work related learning

65. Overall the work-related curriculum is good and the programme is well managed. In 2001, the school identified a need to broaden the curriculum for students in Years 10 and 11 to be more inclusive for those at risk of exclusion. Staff therefore began to work with other providers to identify work placement opportunities. A thorough audit was carried out of existing provision and departments identified opportunities in their courses to contribute to work-related learning. A clear and detailed policy has been developed.
66. The school prepares students thoroughly for a well-developed work experience programme. Placements are screened for health and safety reasons by the education business partnership. Students record their experiences and produce work in English, modern languages and drama when they return to school.
67. There are well-embedded links with a stable team from *Connexions* who work with the school guidance team in identifying and guiding those students approaching Year 10 for whom a programme with some work-related content may be appropriate.
68. Before students begin their work-related day out of school they undergo appropriate induction. The school timetable is carefully constructed to minimise the impact on their other

courses. Reviews of their progress confirm the gains in personal maturity and key skills in for example, car maintenance in very specific assessment regimes. All students on the programme are working towards a qualification and some are in apprenticeship schemes. Good use is made of other local providers, who have good relationships with the school. Students in Club 2000, who concentrate on basic skills programmes also go out on challenge days, some of which have a work-related element.

69. Elements of the PHSE/Citizenship programme in Year 9 support work- related learning. Other curriculum areas contribute, for example food technology students in Year10 had made cakes for a charity sale under strict commercial production line conditions. The school takes advantage of the Wolverhampton CARD scheme which on a given day arranges taster placements in the community for a wide range of possible career options.
70. The school is involved in the *Gifted and Talented* initiative in Wolverhampton, which aims to provide suitably challenging work placements. A database is under development in school which will display all the work-related links available including for example, the geography department link with Jaguar and other business studies department links. Enterprise education is being developed for introduction in 2005 – 2006.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is very good.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Very good	Good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching exploits a variety of methods and activities to engage and interest students, underpinning very good achievement in the first three years
- Very good leadership and management have ensured that staff work as a team to improve teaching based on close analysis of students' work
- Students receive good, specific advice on how to improve their work
- Lessons which exploit boys' interests have narrowed the gap found elsewhere between boys and girls
- Teaching of more advanced reading skills to middle and lower-attaining students does not draw them out fully

Commentary

71. In national tests taken at the end of Year 9, in 2003, girls did better than boys, following national trends. The school's results were very much better than similar schools which indicates very good achievement overall and excellent achievement in 2003. By 2004, standards were still above average, and above those previously found in similar schools. Over three years, performance rose faster than the national rate. Performance in English was better than that found in mathematics and science. It has sustained its level since the last inspection.
72. GCSE English language results in 2004 exceeded the national average for the proportion reaching higher grades (A* to C). Girls did better than boys, with both following the national trend for their gender closely. In GCSE English literature, results were above the national average overall and for the proportion gaining higher grades. Again, girls did better than boys, yet the gap between boys and girls was less than that found nationally.
73. By the end of Year 9, standards of speaking and listening are very good, where discussion on significant social issues such as homelessness is lively and thoughtful. Students read acceptably for information and enjoyment. They understand difficult passages from Shakespeare, explaining dramatic content, and extend their vocabulary in response to well focused teacher probing. Higher-attaining students write very well across a range of styles, whether to make notes for a presentation, review books, or to produce original stories of their own. Lower-attaining students and those with special educational needs lack variety in sentence structure and assurance in control of the tone and style of their language. Nevertheless, they express themselves confidently and clearly in writing, because tasks are well set to interest them.

74. By Year 11, higher-attaining students write fluently, laying out their ideas logically and clearly to communicate to the reader. They deploy extended vocabulary inventively and flexibly where well-designed classroom activities channel their imagination. They understand well the dramatic context and emotional content of nineteenth century poetry because teachers help them to combine understanding of personal experience with comprehension of situations in the poems they study. Middle-attaining students know how to lay out ideas in debates rationally, balancing competing points of view and drawing their own conclusions, following good teacher guidance to help them express a balanced point of view. Lower-attaining students and those with special educational needs benefit from thorough teaching, matched to their needs. It follows that they are secure when describing events in a story or summarising topics from a debate, although limited in discussing and comparing issues in depth.
75. Teachers make use of an extensive variety of methods and activities, and hold students' interest fully by keeping up a constant level of challenge. They engineer classroom situations so that students learn well from each other. As a result, the gap between boys and girls has narrowed in examinations and tests, because lessons take astute advantage of boys' interests. Higher-attaining students write very well because teachers guide them and arouse their curiosity through a wide range of stimulating assignments. All students receive regular encouragement and individual prompting in lessons, helping them to solve problems and clarify meaning for themselves wherever possible. Teachers mark written work thoroughly with encouraging comments, and advice on how to improve. At the same time, middle and lower-attaining students' reading develops unevenly. This is because teaching of more advanced reading skills does not draw out these groups fully.
76. Achievement is underpinned well because understanding grows rapidly as a result of the ways in which teachers absorb students' interest and check constantly that their understanding is consolidated before stretching it further. They adapt their demands well to individual students, spurring them on with good levels of stimuli in class as well as homework assignments well matched to bring out their best.
77. The specialist team has been led very well to improve teaching by regular checking of students' development in the subject. Teachers collaborate very well to improve lesson content to deal with identified weaknesses. The quality of teaching has improved because a stimulating range and variety of activity is built in to planning, making judicious use of national initiatives. The effect of changes is also carefully monitored. Very well managed systems to identify early signs of possible under achievement, allow for additional intervention to be made at an early stage.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

78. Standards of literacy across the curriculum are good. In mathematics, teachers involve students in discussion to build their understanding, while in science, it is used intermittently, and reading skills are not developed reliably. Discussion is confined to whole-class question-and-answer sessions in religious education, so that opportunities to extend speaking and listening skills are missed. In physical education, history and art, teachers emphasise technical language well and help students to use it to build their understanding further. Standards of writing fluctuate from below to above average, usually depending on the significance attached to it by individual teachers. In art, for example, students are guided very well to produce extended written evaluations, which they also use to analyse, interpret and learn from each other's work. In geography, on the other hand, younger students lack opportunities to produce meaningful extended writing to order and consolidate their understanding, and spend time in simple gap-filling exercises instead. A working party of teachers has recently organised a series of well-planned events to encourage students to use the library. It also makes useful suggestions to teachers to improve literacy teaching

across the subjects. At the same time, implementation of policy and suggestions is inconsistent across the school.

Modern foreign languages

French is introduced to all students in Year 7 and French and Spanish are studied by all students in Year 8. In Year 9, students choose to continue with Spanish and/or French. At the end of Year 9, French and Spanish become optional subjects. Students who have Punjabi or Urdu as home languages can opt to take these at GCSE.

French

Provision in French is unsatisfactory.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Average
Achievement	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Unsatisfactory	Good

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- English is used far too much in teaching
- Too many lessons have insufficient pace or challenge, particularly in Years 7 to 9
- The use of the electronic whiteboards in some lessons adds interest and variety
- Students in Years 7 to 9 are making insufficient progress

Commentary

Examination results, standards and achievement

79. The 2004 GCSE results in French were average but did not meet the school target by a significant margin. Girls' results were much higher than those of the boys. Teacher assessments for levels of attainment in Year 9 in 2004 were average. Standards observed during the inspection were below average as a result of previous staffing difficulties and unsatisfactory teaching. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory as a result. Students have weak oral skills, read hesitantly and rely heavily on written prompts in oral work. In too many lessons, students are not actively involved with the result that attitudes and behaviour act as a barrier to learning. The average GCSE results in 2004 reflect the average standards observed in Years 10 and 11. This represents satisfactory achievement. Standards and achievement in Years 10 and 11 are better than in Years 7 to 9 because staffing difficulties have been managed to minimise the effect on examination groups and the teaching is stronger. Students can use a variety of tenses with reasonable accuracy but their range of vocabulary is limited and they express themselves in simple sentences rather than trying more complex structures.

Teaching and learning

80. In Years 7 to 9, teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. English is used predominantly as the language of instruction presenting an unsatisfactory role model to the students and having an adverse effect on the development of the students' listening and oral skills in French. Translation from French into English features heavily in teaching and students rely too heavily on written prompts in their oral work rather than learning to be creative or inventive in French. Teaching presents insufficient challenge in too many lessons meaning that students make only limited progress. Although lessons in Years 7 to 9 are planned in detail, too many contain only a limited range of stimulating activities with the result that students are often bored leading to instances of unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour. In Years 10 and 11, teaching and learning are good. French is used to better effect in teaching, although English is used unnecessarily on occasions. As a result, students' oral and listening skills develop faster but the legacy of their experiences in Years 7 to 9 impedes their progress and achievement. Teaching prepares the students well for the demands of the GCSE examination with particular focus on preparation for the oral examination. In all years, teaching and learning are starting to benefit from the use of

electronic whiteboards to add variety and interest. However, the boards have only recently been installed and the full impact of their use has yet to be exploited.

Leadership and management

81. Leadership of French is satisfactory. It is firm and committed to improvement. Teamwork is promoted but clear expectations are not always articulated or implemented, for example in the use of the target language in all lessons. Leadership presents a professional and respected role model to other teachers of foreign languages. Management is also satisfactory. Departmental documents are clear and useful. However, important departmental policies such as the policy on the use of the foreign languages in teaching are not followed. Teaching and learning is monitored and evaluated according to school criteria which are not sufficiently subject specific to allow identification of particular strengths and weaknesses. Effective use of data is made to analyse performance and track students' progress to their targets. Staffing problems over a number of years have presented management challenges and these have been tackled to minimise disruption to learning, particularly in examination classes. However, standards, progress and achievement in Years 7 to 9 have suffered badly. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. GCSE results have declined from above average to average, the quality of teaching has remained unsatisfactory and English is still used too much in teaching.

Spanish

Provision in Spanish is good.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Above average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Good

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most lessons are well planned and contain a variety of activities to keep students interested and motivated
- Spanish is used well as the language of instruction in most lessons
- Imaginative use of the electronic whiteboards in some lessons helps to add interest and variety
- Standards and achievement in the minority of classes where teaching is weaker are not as high as they should be
- In Years 10 and 11 students are prepared well for the GCSE examination

Commentary

Examination results, standards and achievement

82. GCSE results in 2004 were well above average from a relatively low entry number. The demanding school target was only narrowly missed. The 2004 teacher assessments for attainment levels in Year 9 for foreign languages were average and reflect the standards observed during the inspection. This represents satisfactory achievement for students who enter the school with average levels of attainment overall. Students' listening skills are well developed in most classes and, by the end of Year 9, students are starting to use a variety of tenses with some accuracy. Students' oral skills are variable in quality and depend on the quality of teaching the students receive and the effect of previous staffing difficulties on their progress. In Years 10 and 11, standards observed were above average representing good achievement. Students' listening and speaking skills are well developed as a result of the

effective use of Spanish in teaching and learning in most lessons. Students have a broad range of vocabulary at their disposal and read with good accents and understanding. Higher-attaining students in particular have good oral skills in Spanish and are being well prepared for the GCSE examination.

Teaching and learning

83. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, but good in Years 10 and 11 where there is more consistent and challenging use of Spanish in teaching. Lessons are well prepared and most contain a variety of activities to keep students interested and motivated. However, in the few Spanish lessons where this was not the case, students soon became frustrated and bored with a consequent adverse effect on their attitudes and behaviour. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use Spanish well to present good role models and promote good oral and listening skills. In a small number of lessons English was used too much to promote good language learning. Increasing numbers of students are opting to continue with Spanish in Years 10 and 11 where teaching and learning are good. Students are prepared well for the GCSE examination and higher-attaining students in particular make good progress and enjoy the challenging teaching they receive. Examples of the imaginative use of interactive whiteboards were observed to enhance teaching and learning much to the obvious interest and enjoyment of the students.

Leadership and management

84. The judgements for Spanish are the same as for French except that Improvement since the last inspection has been good. GCSE results, which were below average at that time, are now well above average. Spanish is now introduced to all students earlier in Year 8 and the popularity of the subject has grown, as testified by the increasing number of students opting to continue with the subject to GCSE.

Punjabi

Provision in Punjabi is good.

	Year 11
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good

Leadership	Unsatisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since the last inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students make strong gains in developing reading and writing skills
- Teachers make good use of authentic materials and topics to promote students' social and cultural understanding
- Work is not always planned as effectively as it could be to meet the needs of the full range of ability

Commentary

Examination results, standards and achievement

85. The results in the GCSE examinations in 2004 in Punjabi were above average. Punjabi is not offered by the school at in Years 7 to 9. Although students taking the subject in Year 10 have Punjabi as their home language, their language skills cover a wide range. Most students have average speaking and listening skills with very limited writing skills. However, some students enter the subject in Year 10 with poorly developed speaking skills as the language of the home is English. They make good progress in Year 10 in developing writing skills and most students are able to write clearly and construct grammatically accurate sentences and short paragraphs. They make good progress in applying their prior

knowledge and understanding of the spoken language to develop a wider vocabulary and a good understanding of verb tenses. In Year 11, some students make better progress in developing their writing than in improving oral skills at the same pace. This is partly because of the increasing focus in Year 11 on teaching to examination requirements for reading and writing as these remain the areas of challenge for students. Students' oral responses are accurate but the responses of some students are limited as they are less able to respond spontaneously without guidance. Students with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well in exams. Overall, most students exceed their targets. Students' independent learning skills are not as well developed as they could be and although ICT use is improving, its use in teaching and learning is still limited.

Teaching and Learning

86. Punjabi lessons are taken by teachers from the LEA's community languages service. The teachers use their very good language skills effectively to direct learning. Although expectations are generally appropriate, there is limited differentiation for the full range of ability in classrooms and challenge for higher-attaining students is underdeveloped. Relationships are good as teachers treat students considerately and encourage them to do their best. In the good or better lessons observed in Year 10, activities are clearly structured, a good pace is maintained and students learn well because of the teacher's enthusiasm and interactive teaching strategies. Students are attentive and confident in asking for help. In the satisfactory lesson seen at Year 11, although students work on their written task with concentration, the progress of lower-attaining students is limited because of a lack of focus on key vocabulary in the reading text, and the limited range of teaching and learning strategies used. Some higher-attaining students, especially in Year 11, make good progress in developing expressive language in speaking and listening which the teacher supports through praise and encouragement. However, structured and supported opportunities to develop the oral skills of lower-attaining students are not as evident.
87. Teachers make good use of authentic and current media articles to promote students' social and cultural understanding of key social issues faced by young people in their communities both locally and in the target language countries. The quality of marking and assessment is good; although students are clear about the levels at which they are working and what their target grades are, they are less knowledgeable about how they can improve as targets set for improvement do not make it clear what they need to do to improve their work.

Leadership and management

88. Leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory as there has been only limited progress made on most of the issues raised in the last inspection. Responsibility for taking the issues forward has not yet been clearly defined with line management, professional development of the peripatetic teachers of Punjabi remaining within the LEA. Although provision has improved and there is now more evidence of enthusiasm and enjoyment of language and its use in most of the lessons observed, differentiation and the level of challenge to the highest-attaining students remain underdeveloped. Students now take a more active role in lessons, but the range of interactive teaching and learning strategies remains limited. Resources are predominantly text or worksheet based and the use of ICT is undeveloped. There has been no progress made in increasing collaboration or the exchange of good practice with the modern foreign languages department and the subject teachers remain without a base. There is a lack of celebration of students' work in Punjabi through displays in classrooms or corridors. Monitoring of teaching and planning to ensure development of the subject in line with good practice in modern foreign languages is not in place.

Urdu

Provision in Urdu is satisfactory.

	Year 11
Standards	Above Average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Teaching and Learning	Satisfactory
Leadership	Unsatisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since the last inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject makes a strong contribution to promoting students' social and cultural development
- The teacher has good subject knowledge and uses the target language consistently for teaching and learning
- Students' learning is inhibited by lack of use of their prior knowledge and understanding of the target language
- Tasks are not always modified enough to meet the needs of the full range of ability

Commentary

Examination results, standards and achievement

89. Urdu is not offered at in Years 7 to 9. The results in the GCSE in 2004 were above average. The school has now established lessons in Urdu in Year 10, as previously there was insufficient take up by students to run a class. Although there are only three students in the current Year 11 class, a larger number have opted for the language in the current Year 10. Most students enter Year 10 with average speaking and listening skills, but limited writing skills in the target language. They make good progress in learning to write the Urdu script as the teacher uses a structured approach which helps them to develop their writing skills progressively and to grasp key points of grammar. Their speaking skills do not match the pace of development of their writing skills in Year 10 as opportunities for development are limited. Not enough regard is paid to their existing knowledge and understanding in developing speaking skills to their potential.
90. In Year 11, students make satisfactory progress in speaking and listening as there is a greater focus on role play; however, opportunities for discussion between students are limited and students therefore do not make sufficient gains in expressive language. Most students make good gains in developing their vocabulary, and build well on their native speaker competence in the language. Higher-attaining students reach above average standards in listening, reading and writing, though their speaking is average. The standards of other students are generally average as they lack the opportunities to apply their knowledge in independent language use. In Year 11, students attain average standards overall, and they write well. Given the relatively small number of students and the self-selecting nature of the groups in Years 10 and 11, standards could be higher.

Teaching and learning

91. Teaching is satisfactory, overall, and this is similar to the last inspection. A strength of the teaching is the consistent use of the target language and excellent modelling of the script which helps students to develop good handwriting. However, the teaching approach is focused on teaching to the examination and therefore strategies to promote engagement and enjoyment in learning and using the target language are generally lacking. Although students are attentive and work hard in the small Year 11 group, in the Year 10 lesson

observed, the lack of differentiation and interaction resulted in some students being inattentive and at times, off task. Expectations of learning and behaviour are generally high and the teacher responds well to questions from students. Planning is satisfactory and makes a strong contribution to promoting students' cultural and social development, for example in the Year 10 lesson on the topic of Eid. However, questioning poses insufficient challenge and students' responses therefore are not as developed as they could be given their prior levels of competence in using the target language. Marking is satisfactory but lacks clear guidance for students on the next steps to improve their work.

Leadership and management

92. Leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory, as only limited progress has been made on most of the issues raised in the last inspection. Responsibility for taking the issues forward has not yet been clearly defined with line management and professional development of the peripatetic teacher of Urdu remaining within the LEA. Although provision has improved and there is now a Year 10 class, high attainers are still not sufficiently challenged. There is little evidence of planning to engage students and to generate enthusiasm and enjoyment of language and its use. Resources are predominantly text or worksheet based and the use of ICT is undeveloped. There has been no progress made in increasing collaboration or the exchange of good practice with the modern foreign languages department and the subject teacher remains without a base. There is a lack of celebration of students' achievement and effort in Urdu through displays in classrooms or corridors. Monitoring of teaching and planning to ensure development of the subject in line with good practice in modern foreign languages is not in place.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is good.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good	Satisfactory

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Assessment is used well to monitor, and keep students aware of, progress
- Students achieve well when they work in pairs and small groups
- Marking and other feedback to students does not give them enough information about what grade the work is at or what they need to do to move to the next level or grade
- Good question and answer serves to ensure that all students play an active part in the lesson
- The raising of standards, through the introduction of the National Strategy in Years 7 to 9, has yet to be extended to Years 10 and 11

Commentary

Examination results

93. Results in the GCSE examinations, in 2004, were in line with the national average. This represents a slight fall on the 2003 results following four years of steady improvement. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 are above average when compared to all

schools nationally, and above average when compared to similar schools. Boys' and girls' performance are broadly similar.

Standards and achievement

94. Standards seen during the inspection are above average at the end of both Years 9 and 11. The National Strategy has been introduced and this has raised achievement in Years 7 to 9. Achievement is not as good in Years 10 and 11 because the strategy has not been extended into this phase. Standards observed were better than the examination results in Year 11 because improvements to the quality of teaching seen lower down the school have not yet impacted on the GCSE results. The students achieve best when teachers use a variety of different teaching styles. This was particularly evident in a lesson with a group of Year 7 students who were investigating place value in decimal numbers. Here the students were allowed to work in pairs and small groups for part of the lesson which allowed them to discuss their mathematics and extend their knowledge and understanding. All students achieved well and were actively engaged in learning throughout the lesson. By the end of Year 9 students can use Pythagoras' Theorem to find the missing sides in a right-angled triangle. In Year 11 students can calculate moving averages from a set of data.

Teaching and learning

95. The quality of teaching and learning ranges from very good to satisfactory. In the best lessons, teachers' explanations, based on their good subject knowledge, interest students, fire their imagination and prepare them well for the external examinations. A good example of this was seen in a Year 10 lesson where students investigated the interior angles of a polygon. Teachers make good use of question and answer to assess what has been learnt and to ensure that all students participate in the lesson. Students' work is marked diligently and includes grades relating to progress. Following regular assessments students are aware of the level at which they are working. They do not know what level they are working at in lessons, and do not understand what they need to do to progress from one grade or level to the next. In response to supportive teaching students behave well, concentrate and work hard. Emphasis is placed on the way in which students present their work. As a result, most students are able to show mathematical solutions in a clear and logical way. The routine setting of homework successfully reinforces learning from lessons.

Leadership and management

96. Leadership is well focused on raising standards and improving the provision. Teachers in the department have clearly delegated roles and they work together successfully as a team. Since the last inspection results have improved. Schemes of work have been developed to accommodate the National Strategy, although the school recognises that this has yet to be extended into Years 10 and 11. There is an extensive range of extra-curricular activities which are well supported by students and are raising standards. The work of the department, including the quality of teaching, is regularly monitored, and strengths and weaknesses accurately identified.

Mathematics across the curriculum

97. Students' numeracy skills are above average and are sufficiently developed to help them cope with mathematical work in other subjects. In GCSE physical education, students consider health related fitness and monitor heart rates. Students plot graphs in science and a Year 9 class calculated the efficiency of energy transfer in different domestic appliances. In a Year 7 lesson, students constructed graphs to show how temperature changes over the course of a day. Students were able to label the axes correctly and introduced a line of best fit. The library contains a good number of texts to interest the students and support self study. The provision, overall, is good.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is good.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory teaching, good learning	Satisfactory teaching, good learning

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent links with other schools via science college status
- Good achievement, contributed to by good pupil attitudes
- High quality written work by students aided by thorough marking and target setting
- Good assessment, with a very strong system for tracking achievement
- Good management of staff absence, including good initial teacher training
- The satisfactory lessons did not have as much pace and challenge and were not as well structured as the good lessons

Commentary

Examination results

98. In 2004, Year 9 tests met the national average at both level 5 and 6. Compared with the students' prior attainment these results were well above expectations. At GCSE, results also met the national average, but again were well above what might be expected from prior attainment. Science results closely parallel those in English and mathematics, but students do less well in the core subjects than they do in their other subjects.

Standards and achievement

99. The quality of work seen in students' exercise books was good. Investigation was a strong feature and along with this numeracy was above average, for example in rates of reaction graphs in Year 9. There were good examples of informational research leading to the development of literacy especially in Years 10 and 11 (on pollution in Wolverhampton). Ecology and environmental issues were a strong feature, contributing to good work in citizenship. ICT contributed to good learning as seen in coursework on visual acuity and where students were allowed to interact with the whiteboards. Good student attitudes kept up good work in the lower-attaining sets. Overall, standards firmly met national expectations and exceeded them in some areas. Given that Year 9 and Year 11 students entered the school below average this amounts to good achievement.

Teaching and learning

100. Students were generally learning well, though overall the teaching was satisfactory. The main reason why the learning was better than the teaching seen in lessons was the quality of marking. Students' work was thoroughly marked and targets were used consistently which helped them to achieve well.. This applied equally to students with special educational needs who achieved well. There were examples of good literacy teaching in science such as asking students to headline and summarise paragraphs on respiration. There were also very good examples of lesson structuring, as when a Year 9 class was effectively taught to use scaled diagrams to represent energy transfers and machine efficiency. Very good use was made of individual whiteboards to give the teacher immediate feedback on students' learning. However many teachers did not structure lessons as well as this and some lessons were too didactic and students did not learn as much. Teachers were not always clear enough about learning objectives and how they can be used to assess what students have learnt and raise the level of challenge and pace.

Leadership and management

101. The leadership and management of the department are good. The systems for tracking students' achievement and identifying the need for module resits are good. Management of staff absence, the care and support of new teachers and the implementation of initial teacher training are good. These features have reduced the effects of some prolonged teacher absence, which have concerned some parents. Departmental management has correctly identified some of the weaknesses in the department and made good plans to tackle them.
102. The participation of the science department in the management of specialist science status is very good. This initiative has much improved the departmental accommodation and resources. ICT is now readily accessible, well used and the science department contributes to training in the school. The work done with feeder primaries by the community science teacher is excellent and very well regarded. The work done with a linked special school has led to measurable improvement in achievement. Cooperation with partner secondary schools has led to events, which improve the experience of gifted students in science and the general enrichment of the post-16 science courses by co-operation with higher education.
103. Since the previous inspection, attainment has risen and poor teaching has been dealt with. Students' achievement is now good. There is still insufficient technical support and problems of storage space, but new laboratories have been built and others refurbished. Overall, improvement has been good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is satisfactory.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Very good	Good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are supported well both during and outside lesson time to ensure they all make good progress
- Teachers know their subject and plan their lessons well
- Investment in interactive whiteboards has enhanced the teaching and learning across the curriculum
- In some lessons, student progress is limited by unreliable computer systems and a lack of technical support means that available software is not installed

Commentary

Examination results

104. The results, in 2004, for students following the vocational double award GCSE were in line with national expectations, as they were in 2003. The results of those students following the single award GCSE were above national average in 2004; students achieving more higher grades than they did in 2003. Girls performed better than boys in both courses.

Standards and achievement

105. Standards seen in lessons in Years 7 to 11 were above average. Students in Years 10 and 11 take the vocational GCSE course. They are able to analyse current systems, show an understanding of, and apply, validation checks and understand the difference between verification and validation. Their written work shows very good planning using Gantt charts and dataflow diagrams. They have well-developed research skills and are able to carry out critical evaluations of the systems they have developed. Their practical skills are well developed. In Year 9, students follow the Key Skills level 2 course and by the end of Year 9 they are able to use advanced features of spreadsheets, understand the use of sensors and produce accurate graphs to present data to show weather patterns. They can plan and set up a web site using appropriate digitised images and text.

Teaching and learning

106. Lessons are well planned and in the best lessons delivery by the teachers is enthusiastic and stimulating. In one Year 7 lesson, expert knowledge of students' needs combined with an excellent use of resources ensured that all students made outstanding progress when using a spreadsheet. Teachers make their expectations for behaviour clear. All teachers have good subject knowledge and enjoy good relationships with their students. Most students embark on practical tasks purposefully and they are well supported, often on a one-to-one basis, enabling them all to make good progress and develop their ICT skills. Extension tasks are available for the higher-attaining students and the lower attainers are supported by the use of writing frames. Assessment is good, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Students are given targets to improve their grades and all know at what level they are working. Teachers give after-school sessions to support the vocational courses in Years 9 and 10, raising standards. In some lessons, however, students are allowed to listen to music and are not completely focused on tasks. In two lessons, student achievement was hampered by technical problems with the computer network.

Leadership and Management

107. About half the students in Years 10 and 11 follow a separate ICT course and many students take the vocational GCSE course. After the first cohort completed it in 2004, the impact of this course was evaluated and it has been modified to guide and improve students' understanding of its requirements. Those who do not follow the separate course receive their ICT through other subjects. This delivery has not yet been fully analysed and is an area for development. All students follow a separate ICT course in Years 7 to 9 and they are able to take the vocational Key Skills level 2 course in Year 9. The management of these courses is good. Assessment is a strength and ICT systems are used by the teachers to determine current National Curriculum levels. Primary schools and non-specialists who teach ICT in Years 7 to 9 are well supported.

ICT across the curriculum

108. The senior management team has a clear vision to develop the use of ICT through all curriculum areas. Since the last inspection there has been a big investment in ICT equipment, although the ratio of computers to students is still below the national average. Clusters of equipment are available in most departments and as a result of specialist science school status there has been a heavy investment in interactive whiteboards. Expert use of these to support teaching and learning in many subject areas has been disseminated among other teachers as part of their professional development. Well over three-quarters of staff completed the new opportunities (NOF) training in ICT. As a result, in most curriculum areas the use of ICT is at least satisfactory and students use ICT with confidence and competence. The best use of ICT to support learning is in design technology where students use 3-dimensional modelling and 2-dimensional design to support their work. In geography and science, the interactive whiteboards are employed well and most successfully when students are involved in their use. The development of datalogging in science is limited, as the software has not yet been installed on the networked computers. ICT is used in art for image manipulation and desk top publishing. In most other areas there is some use, however the use of ICT in music is very poor in Years 7 to 9 and unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11. In physical education, the use of ICT to support teaching and learning is unsatisfactory.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is good.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at Year 9 and Year 11 are above average and achievement is good because students are usually taught well
- Students' attitudes to their work and their behaviour are very good because the curriculum they study is very interesting
- The assessment of students is good and most students know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve
- The subject is led and managed well so the standards students achieve are rising
- Occasionally the level of challenge was not high enough

Commentary

Examination results, standards and achievement

109. Results from teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2004 (81% level 5+) were above average. The school results at GCSE in 2004 (58.7% A* to C) were also above average and represent a rising trend in recent years. Students' work at the end of Years 9 and 11 reflects these results, with boys achieving as well as girls. Students achieve well throughout the school and are making particularly good progress in thinking independently as a result of continuing improvement to the range of work studied and the ways they are taught.
110. Students enjoy the work they are doing and want to find out more. They are very interested in the world around them and are passionate to learn about environmental issues. Consequently, students focus on learning, which is important to them and there is little behaviour that interferes with it.

Teaching and learning

111. Teaching and learning are strong, with some being very good, because lessons are planned well to incorporate a wide and varied range of activities that engage all students and encourage them to think for themselves. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and work together closely as a team, conveying enthusiasm for the subject and encouragement for students to do well. Students know they are expected to achieve and behave well, and relationships are very good. Teachers make good use of interactive whiteboards and visual material to make their lessons more stimulating and effective. Lessons begin briskly with activities that capture students' interest and make the focus of the lesson clear. Most lessons then proceed at a pace that maintains interest and teachers' accurate use of correct technical language helps students develop their understanding and improve their skills of expression well. For example, in a Year 11 lesson about the impact of multi-national companies, the teacher immediately captured students' attention and encouraged them to think for themselves by giving the class two facts and then asking them to identify the purpose of the lesson. He then enabled them to explore the different perspectives, responsibilities and impact of multi-national companies in Less Economically Developed Countries and More Economically Developed Countries. Through this lesson, students were learning very effectively and developing their understanding of corporate social responsibility.
112. In those few lessons that were less effective, a few students of differing levels of attainment were insufficiently challenged at times, or the final part of the lesson was rushed so it was less effective. In the one unsatisfactory lesson, the teacher's expectations for behaviour were insufficiently high so the lesson became interrupted and the pace of learning of some of the students was diminished.
113. Students' work is marked regularly and carefully, with comments that are helpful and constructive in all books. As a consequence, most students know the level they are working at and have a good understanding of how to improve their work to achieve a higher standard. Clear targets are set regularly and students are beginning to participate in the process, but this is a recent development so its effect is not yet fully apparent. Although some students have the opportunity to assess themselves and each other, this is not yet widely developed.

Leadership and management

114. The leadership and management have ensured that the subject is vibrant and continuing to develop. Its strengths and weaknesses are well understood with a clear vision for continuing to improve teaching. As a result, standards and teaching have improved well since the last inspection. The curriculum is very good, providing a stimulating blend of study about human and physical geography, places in the United Kingdom and more distant

places. There is a strong emphasis on students learning to use maps and develop their skills of investigation and enquiry. A good range of field work contributes effectively and through relevant opportunities, the subject makes a good contribution to the development of students' skills and understanding of literacy, numeracy and ICT. The addition of Environmental Science to the curriculum is well supported by students and is beginning to show benefits in achievement. The accommodation is unsatisfactory because there are too few spaces and the lack of blackout in two rooms makes the use of the interactive whiteboards and visual material less effective.

History

Provision in history is good.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards seen	Average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Well-structured programmes of study enable students to make good progress
- Students are well prepared for the assessments at all Key Stages
- Thorough marking and feedback aid student progress
- Excellent relationships with the students are reflected in increased take-up for the subject
- Students need to make more use of ICT

Commentary

Examination results

115. In 2004, the teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were around the national average. GCSE results were above the national average with the performance of the boys being significantly above.

Standards and achievement

116. On entry students' standards are average but reflect differences in the experience on offer at the various primary schools. Students quickly establish good working routines and progress in Years 7 to 9 is good. Students develop the skills to evaluate a range of sources. Well-constructed units of work guide the students to write extended essays. These skills are consolidated in Years 10 and 11 where students confidently tackle coursework assignments. By the end of Year 11 standards are above average.

Teaching and learning

117. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have sound subject knowledge. In the majority of lessons there is evidence of excellent planning. Students are informed about lesson objectives and good use is made of starter activities. More imaginative reviews would consolidate the learning. The team is particularly effective in preparing students for coursework and extended writing tasks. Learning techniques allow students to be engaged and challenged. Materials are imaginatively differentiated to cater for differing attainments of student. A lesson on Henry VIII allowed students of all attainments to put forward their ideas on the choices he should make as each new marriage opportunity arose.
118. Most lessons are conducted at a brisk pace. In some lessons there is over emphasis on teacher direction and a lack of time for reflection and consolidation. Teachers stress to students how their work in history is helping their literacy skills. The department also makes significant contributions to other whole-school policies. For example, work on the voting system in the nineteenth century incorporates an exercise on how an Act of Parliament is created. This makes a valuable input into the school's citizenship programme. Visits to Northern France enhance work and history also contributes to the school's gifted and talented programme. Students are encouraged to take part in historical competitions.

Students' work is well presented. Marking is thorough and positive. The recognition of good work, for example through commendations and the setting of targets for improvement, underpin students' progress. Good use is being made of the two interactive whiteboards, but students have limited opportunities to use ICT because of difficulties in accessing the main ICT rooms.

Leadership and management

119. Leadership of the team is good. The successful induction of newly-qualified teachers has created a cohesive team in which all have defined responsibilities, for example for literacy, gifted and talented provision and citizenship. The relationships with students are excellent and history is becoming an increasingly popular option. The team has worked with the science team on active reading resources. The department is involved in the City's Leading Practice programme for foundation subjects at Key Stage 3. The team plan reflects school priorities notably in raising attainment but needs more specific focus on areas for improvement such as the use of ICT by students. The work of the team is hindered by the lack of a team office and adequate storage space. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Results have improved at GCSE and numbers opting to take the subject have increased. Students value the subject and the team is well placed to make further progress.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is good.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination results in the GCSE courses, overall, are above average
- Marking is thorough and conscientious and gives students ideas on how to improve
- Teachers work hard to make learning interesting through varying activities including group work and independent learning
- Lessons often lose some momentum and impact towards the end

Commentary

Examination results

120. GCSE full course results in 2004 were well above national averages with almost three-quarters of students entered obtaining an A* to C grade. The students doing the short course obtained results in line with national averages. These figures represent a generally upward trend since 2001 although the proportion obtaining the highest A* grade is low. The level of work at the end of Year 9 is just above average.

Standards and achievement

121. In Years 7 to 9 overall, standards are just above average and students of differing attainments achieve well. The factual dimension of the work is very good, but there is insufficient opportunity for students to write imaginatively about their personal response to religious ideas and practices. Students can rise to that challenge, for example in some good imaginative work on Muslim birth and naming ceremonies told through the eyes of a Muslim mother. Very good work on Hindu symbolism led students to the construction of some complex personal symbols. Year 10 and 11 students doing GCSE courses produced some very good extended writing on the sanctity of life. Students working

on the sensitive subject of death made thoughtful responses to good questioning and worked co-operatively to make good progress. The quality of work is consistent with the above average GCSE results that are a significant strength of the department.

Teaching and learning

122. Teachers work hard to plan interesting lessons with a variety of different learning activities throughout the school. Consequently, students of all attainments generally respond well and their learning is good. Careful thought about the way students are put together for group work is effective in helping students with low attainment make progress, as in a Year 7 lesson on rites of passage. Marking is thorough and conscientious and makes some use of targets for development, helpful comments, praise and commendations. Independent learning packs developed for Sikhism, Christianity and prejudice are effective. In GCSE courses good class teaching is varied by the use of group work, which was effective in stimulating both independent research and co-operative production of a leaflet on abortion. Effective use of the interactive whiteboard with a challenging group in Year11 captured their interest and good questioning elicited thoughtful responses. In a Year10 lesson on the just war, students were challenged to think throughout a demanding lesson. The department recognises that its least effective practice is in failing to maintain the pace and challenge in the last quarter of lessons.

Leadership and management

123. Good leadership, hard work and good management have ensured that high standards and development work have been sustained through a very difficult period of staff illness. Good teamwork, especially with learning support staff and mutual support, especially for part-time teachers of the subject, is effective and warmly spoken of. A very thorough analysis of examination performance is undertaken and the self-review, classroom observations and checks on exercise books give information about the department's performance that is used to plan improvements. Detailed lesson plans and carefully written schemes of work show that there is a desire to continuously improve and an accurate awareness of areas for development. Accommodation is well managed and good displays make the rooms interesting places in which to learn. Good improvement since the last inspection includes the development of very successful GCSE courses.

TECHNOLOGY

The design and technology department teaches food, resistant materials and graphics in Years 7 to 9 and food, graphics and resistant materials at GCSE. In child development, one lesson was sampled and this was a good lesson. Standards seen both in the lesson and in looking at students' work were above average. GCSE A* to C results are well above average.

Design and technology

Provision in design and technology is very good.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination results at GCSE exceed targets set
- Specialist teachers motivate students by their own enthusiasm
- Schemes of work cover all curriculum requirements and ensure students have a broad skill base to build on
- Very good leadership ensures the best use of teaching and learning resources
- Insufficient computer-aided design and manufacturing (CAD/CAM) facilities in the food area prevents students gaining the highest marks in coursework

Commentary

Examination results, standards and achievement

124. By the end of Year 9 standards are average and achievement is good. By the end of Year 11, students have above average standards thereby making achievement very good. GCSE examination results are above average in A* to C grades in all subjects offered and well above national average in food and graphics, where the pass rate was 100%.

Teaching and learning

125. Teaching and learning are very good. Lessons are well planned and most have good pace with a variety of activities. Teachers make good use of starter activities and have good questioning techniques to establish students' knowledge and understanding of topics covered. Teachers have good relationships with the students who are keen to learn and not easily distracted from their work in class, especially at examination levels. The work of the lesson is reviewed at the end to confirm learning. Students know their National Curriculum levels or predicted grades and know how to improve. Teachers are all specialists in their subjects and their knowledge and experience is used to excite and enthuse students to succeed. Teachers have high expectations of their students and they respond by rising to the challenge. ICT is used throughout the department and is particularly skilfully used to help students in their coursework. For instance in food technology, students compile charts to show nutritional values in their products and in resistant materials, students calculate fixed and variable costs for their designs when considering industrial manufacture. The use of CAD/CAM is a requirement of the examination boards and students make good use of what is available in the department, but the food area suffers from lack of CAM at present.

Leadership and management

126. Leadership and management are very good. There is a clear intention to build on the success of the department and plans are recorded for future improvements. All the teachers work well together as a team. The systems in place for marking and recording students' work are exemplary and the data collected are used well for lesson planning and target setting. Record cards are proving very successful for monitoring and tracking students' progress in their coursework. The department now has a half-yearly rotation system for Years 7 to 9 which gives students more time to gain skills and experience of food and resistant materials with graphic techniques embedded in the schemes of work. This becomes apparent when looking at the standards of work in Years 10 and 11. Self-evaluation in the department is thorough and ongoing.
127. Accommodation varies in quality across the department with some food rooms very spacious and well equipped but other areas too small and hindering progress. Extra-curricular activities are mainly workshop time after school but, in addition, the gifted and talented students are targeted for a range of activities, which give recognition to their special requirements.
128. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Teaching has improved as have leadership and management. Technician and teaching support time has increased, is well deployed and provides a valuable resource for the department, particularly in support for students with special educational needs.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

The school provides courses in art, drama and music. Work in drama was sampled. GCSE drama results were well above the national average, both for those reaching higher grades (A* to C) and overall. Gender comparisons are not valid due to the small number of boys taking the examination. Good teaching ensures that students exploit their own ideas, and use good teamwork skills as they work collaboratively and develop and refine their own

ideas for performance. When acting, they use space and body language decisively, and communicate clearly in speech. Students achieve well because teachers involve them in a wide range of stimulating acting exercises, in class and outside the normal school day. They build confidence and assurance in practical drama projects, whether performing a pantomime in local primary schools, or taking part in the well-established tradition of major musical theatre presentations. Students' experience and understanding are also enriched by visits from professional companies.

Art

Provision in art and design is very good.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Art is a successful and popular subject in which students do well
- Leadership and management are highly effective and teamwork is a strong feature
- The art curriculum is well structured and imaginative and students produce original and creative work
- Some lessons are taught in non-specialist art rooms, which can have a limiting effect on students' learning

Commentary

Examination results

129. The results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2004 showed that standards were average. Results in 2004 GCSE examinations were above the national average. Boys and girls both achieve well.

Standards and achievement

130. Students achieve well during Years 7 to 9, learning a wide range of new skills. Standards are average at the end of Year 9. They use a variety of different media in both two and three-dimensions. Year 7 students gain a strong foundation in art with a strong emphasis on the basic elements, such as tone and colour. This continues to be developed in Years 8 and 9. Other projects develop students' awareness of a variety of different cultures and movements in art. Standards of work in Years 10 and 11 are above average and students achieve very well. Observational drawing skills are strong and students experiment using a range of mixed media. Students are offered a range of exciting projects, which develop their cultural understanding further. Critical analysis of the work of other artists is an integral part of students' work.

Teaching and learning

131. Art is taught very well. Lessons are well planned and effective, with clear objectives set to ensure students make good progress. Teachers offer a range of specialisms, including printmaking and ceramics. They have high expectations of students, which have helped to create a well-established learning culture in lessons. Students display positive attitudes in lessons and they take pride in their work. Students and teachers relate well to each other, and students are supportive of each other. Students' progress is monitored effectively. They have a clear understanding of their current National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades. Targets are set and used effectively to ensure good progress. Oral and written feedback enables students to understand how to improve. Students are able to assess their own work and the work of others as well as setting their own targets. Skills in literacy, numeracy and citizenship are developed well in lessons. ICT is used for research and to manipulate images. Teaching is successful in meeting the requirements of students with special

educational needs and those with English as an additional language. Gifted and talented students are encouraged to develop their abilities to the full by using a wider range of materials. Some are entered for the GCSE exam early to enable them to progress on to higher qualifications sooner. The department is very welcoming to students, who are encouraged to complete work outside normal curriculum time. Sketchbooks are used across all years, and homework is an extension of work covered in class. Displays in classrooms and around the school enrich the environment and encourage students to do well. Some classes are taught in non-specialist rooms, which means there are problems with equipment, and learning can be restricted.

Leadership and management

132. The department is very well led and managed. It consists of a good team of enthusiastic teachers, who benefit from sharing their knowledge and expertise. They share a clear vision for the department and its future, including the need to develop further the use of ICT. Departmental documentation is thorough and extensive. Assessment is a strength. In addition to the vibrant displays around the school, the department proudly shows its successes each year in an art showcase exhibition. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Examination results have improved and ICT facilities have been established and developed.

Music

Provision in music is satisfactory.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Good

Leadership	Unsatisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers are skilled musicians and use their secure subject knowledge to ensure lessons are highly practical
- The quality of instrumental tuition provided by the visiting teachers is very good and enhances the work undertaken in the classroom very well
- The department has not fully understood the requirements of the National Curriculum and schemes of work are out of date, for example students in Years 7 to 9 do not use electronic keyboards or computers with music software
- Assessments at the end of Year 9 are inaccurate
- Music makes an important contribution to the overall life of the school through extra-curricular activities and productions which involve many students

Commentary

Examination results, standards and achievement

133. GCSE results for the last two years were below average for those students taking the examination. By the end of Year 9, students have been given lots of opportunities to play a variety of tuned and untuned percussion instruments in lessons which improve their performance skills well. Students enjoy music and they make satisfactory progress in lessons which are very practical and within the limits of what is provided. Although lessons are practical, students in Years 7 to 9 do not get enough opportunities to use electronic keyboards or computers with music software so they are not able to

create, refine and modify pieces; this limits what they can achieve. Musically talented students are competent performers but because they are given undemanding work during lessons they often underachieve, many feel they are just repeating work they have done earlier. Students entering the GCSE course in Year 10 have a wide range of musical experience and achieve well in most aspects of the course, because of well-planned teaching. Standards of performance are good and by the end of Year 11, students use their performance skills well. Musically talented students have achieved high levels of performance on their instruments as a result of the high quality instrumental teaching they receive. Because of the lack of opportunity to use music technology in Years 7 to 9, composing skills are underdeveloped for this stage of the course which affects their final attainment and is the main reason why results are still below average.

Teaching and learning

134. Teachers are competent musicians who plan their lessons well and try to develop both performing and appraising skills through the practical activities in lessons. In the best lessons, teaching is interesting and ensures students are focused and on task. However, standards in music are below average because the schemes of work used are not taking sufficient account of the requirements of the National Curriculum. Teachers have underestimated what is expected in Years 7 to 9 and are starting at too low a point; consequently, the work set is often too easy. In the weaker lessons, teachers give the students too much information instead of letting them work it out for themselves. In Years 10 and 11, students learn well because the curriculum is better and lessons frequently incorporate a range of interesting musical topics that ensure students are motivated and immersed in their learning. Students are keen to learn and work very well together in small groups.

Leadership and management

135. The department's contribution to extra-curricular activities is good and teachers give generously of their time to encourage many students to take part in school productions, choirs and ensembles. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory because the department has not kept up-to-date with developments in music education. Schemes of work are musical in content but have not fully taken into account new initiatives or requirements for the subject. Assessment procedures are adequate in Years 10 and 11, but a lack of understanding of National Curriculum requirements means that in Year 9 the standards students achieve are over-estimated. Marking is inconsistent and ranges from detailed information indicating what to do to improve to unhelpful comments such as 'mostly well written'. The department has made unsatisfactory progress since the last inspection. The lack of computers and limited use of electronic keyboards remain significant weaknesses.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is good.

	Year 9	Year 11	GCSE PE
Standards	Average	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Improvement since last inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are consistently well above average

- Very good pupil attitudes assist good learning and achievement
- Very good leadership takes effective action and meets the needs of students very well
- Very good extra-curricular activities give very good opportunities for students to extend their learning
- Inconsistency in lesson evaluation, assessment and marking affects what is achieved
- Poor accommodation affects what can be taught and achieved

Commentary

Examination results

136. GCSE results in 2003 and 2004 were well above average but results in 2003 were better than in 2004 because there were fewer candidates with grade D results. No student scored less than a D grade in either year. More boys than girls are entered on the course. Students did better than expected when target grades are compared with actual grades. All other students followed the level of entry course where results were above average.

Standards and achievement

137. Standards in Year 9 are average and achievement is good. in relation to students' standards on entry to the school. For example, students in Year 7 are in the early stages of learning dance and they are still grappling with understanding basic movement, so there is little quality in their work although their understanding of movements is developing well. In Year 11, standards for the majority of students who follow the compulsory course are above average and achievement is good. Students on the GCSE course are well above average and students achieve very well. Talented team players achieve very well and are encouraged to join clubs and some perform at local and regional levels. Non-participants achieve as well as others when they are included in the learning; observation sheets are used so students follow the National Curriculum. Students very positive attitudes to PE support their achievement well.

Teaching and learning

138. Teaching and learning are good, overall. Teachers' questioning is effective in extending students' learning. A minority of groups are still too much teacher led, as mentioned in the previous report, although most teachers question well to bring out learning and understanding. For example, in a Year 7 table tennis group, students were absorbing skills very well to use the face of the bat to deliver forehand and backhand push strokes and higher-performing students were introduced to the topspin. The teacher pushed all students' understanding by very good questions on stance and action and checked this learning when reviewing their performance. This ensured that students were working to their levels of capability and achieving very well but this kind of provision, for different groups, was not evident in other lessons.
139. Personal development is fostered well. In the best lessons, teachers give students time to observe one another's work and analyse movement and performance to refine and improve their own and others' work. There is clear guidance on encouraging and supporting one another's achievement. Good demonstrations assist all students to understand requirements. Evaluation at the end of lessons and assessment in the GCSE course is not used effectively enough to help students to check their progress and measure performance against targets; marking does not consistently tell students how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

140. Very good leadership has evaluated subject provision and has focused very well on improvement. Good management has led to a wider curriculum including the introduction of a good dance course. Schemes of work are established, but there are inconsistencies in the support of numeracy and citizenship, although support for literacy in lessons is consistently good. Curriculum activities are limited in Years 10 and 11 because time allocation is minimal so teachers make great efforts to teach the curriculum in the time available and this affects what can be achieved. Teaching is further exasperated by constraints of the poor facilities. The GCSE course and theory lessons have no specific base to link practical and theory together well. ICT provision is insufficient to support the subject's needs. Overall, improvement since the previous report has been satisfactory. The curriculum fulfils the National Curriculum. Results are consistently well above average. Accommodation is still poor and little is done to maintain the existing facilities to a satisfactory standard.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Vocational ICT was inspected as part of the inspection of ICT and this is reported in under that subject. Vocational education courses are taught in Years 10 and 11. This widens the curriculum, meets the needs of different groups of students and extends their opportunities. Within this, a good health and social care course is the longest established, most

successful and most popular course with several students going on to the sixth form to complete a BTEC course. Students had above average results in 2004 and achieve well consistently because teaching, learning and attitudes are good overall. Students learn, for example, about health and the effect of passive smoking and drug taking. They make visits to health establishments and benefit from external speakers visiting the school; good links have been established. A single science pilot course, not linked to any specific vocational area, prepares students satisfactorily for the workplace; for example, part of the programme includes car maintenance. This does not involve external visits or speakers but links well with the applied level two BTEC course available in the sixth form. All courses prepare students well for the world of work with good opportunities in improving literacy, numeracy, problem solving, social and ICT skills. All courses are well monitored for effectiveness.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship is taught as part of the provision for personal, social and health education.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is unsatisfactory.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Teaching and Learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum for Years 10 and 11 does not cover enough of the statutory programme of study
- Arrangements for reporting on students' achievements have not been satisfactory
- The co-ordinator is aware of these shortcomings and is implementing good plans to improve the subject
- The pilot unit of work on government and law-making taught in Year 9 is a model of good practice

Commentary

141. Students in Years 7 to 9 are taught citizenship as part of their personal, health and social education programme. Planned units of work are also taught in history, mathematics and ICT. Together, this provides sound coverage of the citizenship National Curriculum. The school is implementing good plans which will help to further improve students' knowledge and understanding of citizenship.
142. Students in Years 10 and 11 are also taught citizenship as part of their personal, health and social education programme. Here, however, the National Curriculum programmes of study are not covered well enough and not enough time is being spent on the subject. The school is aware of these shortcomings and already has an action plan in place to improve the curriculum from September 2005 onwards.
143. Prior to the inspection, students had not been receiving separate reports for citizenship except in Year 9 and these were mainly based on students' own self-assessments. This has not been satisfactory. However, the plans to improve this are well-documented and coherent.

144. No overall sample of written work was available at the time of inspection. However some lessons were observed where aspects of citizenship were being taught, the quality of teaching and learning was good because teachers were knowledgeable and made the lessons interesting with group work and some lively discussion. For example, an ICT lesson in Year 9 started with a lively quiz and discussion on the minimum legal ages for activities such as learning to drive and buying solvent products. Students then researched the topic further, using the internet. In these lessons in Years 7 to 9, overall standards are average and achievement is satisfactory. In Years 10 and 11, although there was also some good teaching in topics such as financial literacy, overall standards are below average because students do not cover enough of the citizenship curriculum and therefore do not achieve as much as they should.

145. A new unit of work has been tried out in Year 9, on the theme of law making and the working of parliament. This helps students gain a real insight into both the mechanisms of law making and the moral and political dimensions of the process. As part of the project, students have to write speeches in support of a law which they wish to pass and then have to defend their views. Standards in this particular unit of work are above average and students achieve well. It is a model of good practice for the future development of the subject.
146. Through its processes of self-evaluation the school has recognised the need to make improvements in citizenship. Good leadership and management has already done a lot of the groundwork for this. Suitable training has already been delivered to the whole staff in order to improve their understanding of the curriculum. Good quality action plans clearly set out what needs to be done and by when it will be achieved. The school is well placed to bring about improvement.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, eleven subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2004 (latest year for which national comparisons are available).

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-B		% gaining grades A-E		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	3	0	21.6	100	78.3	23.3	28.5
Biology	14	7.1	10.4	64.3	63.5	16.4	19.8
Business studies	5	0	15.4	40	75.3	14	25.7
Chemistry	7	0	13.2	57.1	70.3	15.7	23
Communication studies	3	0	24.9	100	87.2	30	32.8
Economics	5	0	24.9	80	71.6	26	25.8
English Literature	8	37.5	17.4	100	86.2	40	29.7
Design and technology	1	0	13.9	100	72.6	40	24.3
Geography	3	0	20.4	66.7	75.5	16.7	27
History	2	0	20.8	50	82.2	20	29.2
ICT	2	0	8.8	100	66.6	25	26
Mathematics	11	0	14.1	45.5	59.9	12.7	20.5
Music	1	0	16.9	100	79.8	40	27.5
Other languages	5	60	47.7	100	82.5	46	37.8
Other social studies	19	0	15.1	73.7	67.8	21.1	23.2
Physics	11	9.1	14.8	81.8	66.4	20	22.4
Religious studies	2	50	26.1	100	82.2	40	31.2
Sociology	19	0	19.6	42.1	72.1	10.5	25.9
Spanish	1	0	17	0	77.1	0	26.5
Sports/PE	1	0	11.8	100	72.2	30	22.8

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-B		% gaining grades A-E		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	11	90.9	50.2	100	98.3	107.3	87.1
Biology	19	36.8	40	100	96.6	82.1	79.3
Business studies	12	33.3	39.4	100	98.9	78.3	81.8
Chemistry	18	27.8	50	94.4	97.7	70	85.7
Communication studies	6	0	40.4	100	99.2	70	83.5
Economics	10	10	54.3	100	98.8	66	89.8
English Literature	11	18.2	44.9	100	99.4	72.7	85.5
Design and technology	10	30	35	100	97.8	78	77.9
Geography	11	27.3	46.4	100	98.8	70.9	85.2
History	12	25	45.6	100	99	73.3	85.1
ICT	1	0	25.7	100	96.3	80	71.1
Mathematics	25	24	56.6	70	96.8	56.8	89.5
Music	4	25	37.1	100	98.2	70	79.5
Other languages	2	100	66.7	100	97.3	110	95.6
Other social studies	21	28.6	42.5	100	97.4	74.3	81.6
VCE Business	29	17.5	24.1	96.5	91.6	70.2	76.4
VCE Health and social care	16	0	24.9	100	93.5	62.5	70

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The school provides courses in English language and literature, French, Spanish, Urdu and Punjabi. The focus subjects were English literature, French and Punjabi and Spanish was sampled. In the Spanish lesson seen a small group of students made good progress in speaking and listening. They gave short talks on regional Spanish cuisine, supported by colourful presentations using ICT. Achievement was good because students had prepared well for the lesson and teaching was good.

English

Provision in English literature is good.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good

Progress since last inspection	Satisfactory
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Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in work seen are improving as a consequence of well-prepared and authoritative teaching
- Teachers give very good individual assistance to help students know how well they are doing and how to improve
- Good leadership and management deploy teachers' strengths well across the subject
- Limited library facilities curtail student ability to research and study independently

Commentary

Examination results

147. Results were well below those found nationally both overall and for the proportion gaining higher grades (AB). They fell from the previous year. The small numbers of boys taking the subject make gender comparisons invalid.

Standards and achievement

148. Standards in work seen in both years have improved over previous examination results and are average, overall. In Year 12, students understand and describe the links between Elizabethan drama and its changing social and historical context, in response to authoritative teacher questioning and briefings. They go on to offer hesitant but apt summaries of dramatic action. By Year 13, students explain competently the main themes of plays in twentieth century drama. They summarise the key features of characters and link these plausibly to telling quotations and events. For example, a group studying R.C.Sherriff's 'Journey's End' understood the way differences of rank, class and social background between the characters underpinned dramatic events in the play. Higher-attaining students utilise a fluent critical vocabulary to express and refine their own responses, following authoritative teaching of Shakespeare. Lower-attaining students suffer from limited general and specialist vocabulary and continuing problems of spelling and punctuation.

Teaching and learning

149. Teachers use good subject knowledge to question and confirm student understanding. Students also benefit from the well-prepared audio-visual materials which extend their understanding and ability to match details of texts studied to important characters and ideas. They take advantage of a large amount of very well-focused individual coaching on their work, which is offered in addition to ordinary lessons. Teachers mark written work and annotate it with helpful notes to draw attention to strengths. At the same time, they draw on examination criteria well to explain to students why they are doing well and where they should improve further. The quality and range of library facilities to support learning are limited. As a result, student abilities to research independently and read more widely are curtailed. Achievement is good because most students are tested fully by the work, while teachers adapt their questioning well to challenge individuals to extend their understanding. At the same time, independent learning and discussion to explore new ideas are sometimes limited.

Leadership and management

150. Leadership and management of the subject are good. Teachers are led thoughtfully so that their relative academic strengths are deployed appropriately to different parts of the course. Strength lies in the way teachers are encouraged to gain experience of advanced students' needs by taking part in a team which mentors and advises them.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

151. Standards of literacy across the subjects are average. Most subjects encourage students to explore ideas in classroom discussions. Students read competently, using the library and

internet to extract detail and information. Writing is laid out well where students know how to take well-organized notes in formal written assignments. Here, they are taught well to order their thoughts logically into paragraphs and sentences.

Punjabi

Provision in Punjabi is good.

	Year 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership	Unsatisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Improvement since last inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students make good gains in speaking and listening
- Students make very good progress in developing an understanding of current cultural and social issues
- Teaching is appropriately based on a range of interesting authentic resources
- There are too few planned opportunities for students to discuss and debate their own and other students' views and opinions

Commentary

Examination results

152. As Punjabi was introduced as a sixth-form subject in the previous academic year, the current Year 13 students will be the first to be entered for A levels. Results in 2004 for the small number of students entered for the AS level exams in years 12 and 13 showed a pass rate of 100% and are broadly in line with national averages.

Standards and achievement

153. Standards attained by the small numbers of students in both years 12 and 13 are above average. Year 12 students build well on their achievement at GCSE and are able to draw out social and cultural nuances embedded in texts they are studying. They can express their opinions about current social issues, for example about young people's transition to higher education, in preparation for a written response about parental fears. They are able to justify their views although some require prompting by the teacher to give extended responses. Year 13 students respond willingly and confidently in the target language and their reading skills are developed sufficiently to be able to discuss topics they are studying, for example an article about Punjabi folk music. They develop a wider vocabulary and are quick to make sense of unfamiliar words from the contexts of use and to use them correctly in sentences. Students make good progress and show their enjoyment in using the target language in speaking and writing.

Teaching and learning

154. Teaching is good, overall. The experienced and enthusiastic teacher has established very good relationships in the classroom where students' own opinions and views on current issues are respected. Their responses are praised and the teacher is quick to draw out justifications. There is good attention to examination requirements and criteria, however this is not allowed to dominate the teaching. In a lively and interactive Year 12 lesson observed, the teacher reminded students of the criteria for a written response in the form of a letter. Although very good use is made of authentic resources, such as newspaper and magazine articles, the extent to which ICT is used by students is underdeveloped. The small class sizes sometimes inhibit the extent to which students extend their speaking and listening skills and there are insufficient opportunities for students to learn through pupil to pupil interaction. Although the teacher shows a very good understanding of students' individual learning needs the extent to which lessons are matched to the range of needs is as yet limited. Assessment is good and the teacher uses praise to encourage improvement; however targets set for improvement do not always offer clear and constructive guidance for improving work.

Leadership and management

155. Leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory as there has been limited progress made on most of the issues raised in the last inspection with regard to aspects of provision for community languages, for example the lack of a base for teachers. Responsibility for taking the issues forward has not yet been clearly defined with line management, professional development of the peripatetic teacher of Punjabi remaining within the LEA. Collaboration or the exchange of good practice with the modern foreign languages department is undeveloped. There is a lack of celebration of students' work in Punjabi through displays in classrooms or corridors. Monitoring of teaching and planning to ensure development of the subject in line with good practice in other modern languages is not in place.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is good.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Improvement since last inspection	Not reported on separately

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' good subject knowledge and experience of the requirements of the examinations are raising standards
- Achievement is raised through the use of good individual tuition
- In lessons, students are not sufficiently intrigued to extend the mathematics
- Students work industriously in response to supportive teaching

Commentary

Examination results

156. Results in the 2004 A Level examinations at the end of Year 13 were well below average. Twenty five students took the examination; nineteen passed with nearly a quarter receiving grades A-B. Results in the AS level, at the end of Year 12, were below average. Thirty five students took the examination, half passed and 7 received the top grades.

Standards and achievement

157. The course attracts students with a wide range of attainments, many joining with standards which are below average for advanced level study. Students achieve well and standards seen in the GCE lessons observed and in the scrutiny of students' work were average, overall. For example, in a good lesson on factorising polynomials, students developed their knowledge of algebra to include an understanding of how long division can be applied to identities.

Teaching and learning

158. Teaching and learning are good, overall. All lessons in the sixth form are delivered by mathematicians who have good subject and examination knowledge. This enhances learning as it means that students are taught to develop an understanding of why procedures work. Students are also coached in how to do well in the examinations.

Teachers are enthusiastic and keen to encourage the use of the correct mathematical language. All students learn well. Those who enter the course with below average standards benefit from good advice given in individual discussions. In response to the supportive teaching students work hard, but tend to be placid and rarely ask questions of the teacher which extend the mathematical content of the lesson.

Leadership and management

159. Sixth-form mathematics is well led. Clear vision is focused on raising standards and improving the provision. This has facilitated the good development of the Further Mathematics course, which is taught in conjunction with Wolverhampton University and has elements of web- based distance learning.

Numeracy across the curriculum

160. Overall, numeracy across the sixth form curriculum is good. Sixth-form students use and develop their numeracy skills in many subject areas, such as psychology and sociology where good use is made of statistics. In food technology, nutritional values for different meals are calculated. In resistant materials, students had to determine fixed and variable manufacturing costs. The school library contains a good range of reference books to support self-study.

SCIENCE

The focus subjects were biology and psychology. Lessons were sampled in chemistry, physics and applied science. In a good Year 13 physics A Level lesson, a group of students with excellent attitudes investigated the electrical properties of a water voltameter. The investigations were individual and therefore fully differentiated. Teaching and learning were good; standards above average. In a Year 12 chemistry AS level lesson the large group of well-motivated students compared the reactions of alkanes and alkenes. The teacher had good knowledge and understanding of chemistry. The lesson was carefully prepared and thoroughly explored but the activity was slow. Teaching and learning were satisfactory and standards met expectations. A Year 12 class, following a pilot Applied Science BTEC 2 course, found some of the more abstract concepts in chemistry mole calculations difficult. However, teaching and learning were satisfactory. A class of below average attainment was making satisfactory progress.

Biology

Provision in biology is good.

	Year 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and know the examination board requirements well, enabling all students to make good progress
- Links with local universities enrich the A level syllabus
- Assessment is well managed and used by teachers to support students and inform planning

- The use of ICT to record data is an area for development

Commentary

Examination results

161. In 2004, Year 13 results were above average with more girls achieving higher grades. This was an improvement on the 2003 results. Over time there has been an increase in the number of students achieving higher grades and the number of students opting for A level biology.

Standards and achievement

162. Standards seen in lessons were above average. Students work well in groups and have well developed manipulative skills. This was seen particularly when they were handling bacterial cultures and using microscopy. They are aware of health and safety issues when conducting experiments, implementing them in an orderly manner. Students have a very good understanding of theoretical concepts. They are able to identify cellular structures and compare the anatomy of prokaryotic and eukaryotic cells. They relate molecular structures to function and have a good understanding of cell division, and DNA replication. Year 12 students identify areas of the heart and relate to function and interpret a trace of pressure changes in the heart in terms of the cardiac cycle.

Teaching and learning

163. In all lessons seen teaching was satisfactory or better. All teachers have very good subject knowledge and an up-to-date understanding of the examination board requirements which is disseminated to students during lessons as appropriate. In the best lessons, teaching was appropriate to learning styles and this, combined with a variety of tasks, stimulated student interest. In one lesson, students were invited to use an interactive whiteboard to predict the results of their experiments. In less successful lessons, students have fewer opportunities to express their views. Excellent resources are available to support learning, although they are not fully exploited in all lessons. Lessons are planned meticulously and students are encouraged and supported by their teachers during practical activities to identify and remedy sources of error in their methodology. Students are assessed as they complete each unit of work and given feedback on how they can improve. Those requiring additional help are supported by supplementary out-of-school lessons. Enrichment is good. There are strong links with a local university which involve visits to workshops and visiting speakers who have given lectures on photosynthesis and genetics.
164. Students enjoy the subject and many plan to continue their higher education studies in a biology-related subject. Although ICT is used in some lessons this in an area for development,- particularly the use of data logging and biological simulations.

Leadership and Management

165. Continuing professional development by key staff ensures that they keep up-to-date with the examination board requirements. All members of the department are supported and encouraged to develop their skills in delivering the A level course. Teaching and learning styles and modified to meet students' requirements. Assessment is well managed and used to determine the needs of students. Since the last inspection more students are opting for the subject and achieving an increased number of higher grades making improvement good.

Psychology

Provision in psychology is satisfactory.

	Year 13
Standards	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Improvement since last inspection	Not reported on

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Some very good teaching
- Very positive student attitudes
- Improvement in the use of ICT, valued by students
- The data on student s' achievement is not analysed and used as well as it could be

Commentary

Examination results

166. In 2004, A level results were average, but there was a relative shortage of results at A and B grades. In previous years AS results were better than 'A' level, but this was not true in 2004. Many students failed to attain their predicted grade and did not do as well as they did in other subjects.

Standards and achievement

167. The standards seen in the school meet national expectations. Students' essays (on such topics as the ethics of experimentation and models of memory) show that their achievement is satisfactory. In a lesson seen, they were making satisfactory progress in understanding how to use tables of critical value. Where they are given the opportunity, students can discuss issues using psychological vocabulary. They have very good attitudes to work and the subject and value discussion, debates, role-play and active learning in general. They enjoy the Year 13 topics (on clinical and criminal psychology) and a significant number wish to study the subject at university. Some groups in Year 13, however, do not discuss well. Year 12 students can evaluate psychological theories, such as those of Freud and display critical thinking when the teachers allow them space to do so.

Teaching and learning

168. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, with some very good examples. Teachers have a good range of expertise and knowledge and understanding of the subject. Strengths of teaching included thorough marking with feedback, checks on folder organisation and active processing of text. ICT is used well both for teacher exposition and for student presentations. The better teaching also included active learning techniques, annotation of text and emphasis on vocabulary. It gave students the opportunity to make their own evaluation of psychological theories and perspectives. However some teaching, especially of statistics, a subject on which the students are not particularly confident, was abstract. Students were presented with definitions rather than the opportunity to infer them from concrete examples. It may be that teaching of this nature explains why many of the weaker candidates score below expectations, in contrast with other similar subjects.

Leadership and management

169. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Staffing is good with two specialists and non-specialists who make a good contribution to the department. There is a need to analyse achievement data as a first step to improving progress and achievement. There is also a need to continue developing the schemes of work. There is a shortage of textbooks that students can take home, which may be having an impact on standards. The coherence of the department is made more difficult to achieve because of a lack of easy access of all staff to the psychology base, although the existence of the base is a step forward since the previous inspection. The biggest improvement since the previous inspection is the acquisition of an interactive whiteboard, which students recognise has already improved teaching and learning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

ICT was not a focus subject for the inspection.

ICT across the curriculum

170. Students use ICT to support learning in their post-16 courses. ICT has a good impact on teaching and learning in psychology where the interactive whiteboard is used well and students have specialist software. They use their ICT skills well to make presentations. In design technology, ICT is very well used in graphics. Students use ICT facilities at a local art gallery to develop their art work. Facilities for independent study using ICT are generally not well developed, although biology

students have access to a specialist program for research and are encouraged to extend their critical thinking.

HUMANITIES

The school provides courses in history, geography, law, sociology, government and politics and critical thinking. Geography, history, and sociology were focus subjects. One lesson in law was sampled and one in critical thinking. In the law lesson, teaching was good because varied and stimulating classroom activities sustained high levels of student interest. Learning was good as result of knowledgeable teacher briefings, opportunities to benefit from individual coaching and instruction, and practical role-play activities to help students consolidate and extend their understanding. Achievement and standards are good in consequence. In the critical thinking

lesson in Year12 seen, the teaching included particularly good questioning to encourage students to develop their ideas. This is a new course so no results are available.

Geography

Provision in geography is good.

	Year 13
Standards	Average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Main strengths

- Students achieve well because their level of motivation is excellent and they are taught well
- The curriculum is very good, providing a stimulating and well-planned programme that attracts an increasing number of students
- The assessment of students is good and most know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve
- The subject is led and managed well so the standards students achieve are rising

Commentary

Examination results, standards and achievement

171. The school results at A level in 2004 were below average, but the standards in the current Year 13 are higher, showing an improvement that is similarly reflected in Year 12 where standards are higher still. Students all achieve well, and boys achieve as well as girls, because they are taught well and find the subject "vibrant, colourful and exciting".

Teaching and learning

172. Teaching and learning are good with some being very good because teachers know the subject very well and use interactive whiteboards and visual material effectively so students find the work relevant and stimulating. They enjoy the subject, feel well taught and want to learn. Teachers convey their enthusiasm for the subject and work well together as a cohesive team. They expect students to achieve well which is reflected in the challenge of the work, and all teachers are constantly looking for ways to improve their lessons. Lessons are carefully planned to provide a good range of interesting and varied activities and they proceed at a pace that maintains students' levels of concentration. The achievement of students with higher levels of attainment is particularly improving because teachers place a strong emphasis on helping students learn to think independently and generate

geographical questions for themselves. For example, in a Year 13 lesson about water pollution, students used Ordnance Survey maps to identify areas of potential pollution, thus encouraging them to think for themselves. The teacher then gave them a card activity through which they learned about different pollutants, their composition and effects. Finally, they were given “The Thames Bubbler Mystery” to solve, through which they learned how the River Thames had become polluted and the subsequent actions which successfully turned it to a cleaner river. The lesson was very successful because the range and progression of ideas suited the needs of all students, their differing approaches to learning and levels of attainment. Although no teaching seen was less than good, the slightly weaker aspect of teaching was the use of questions, which occasionally was generating single word answers from students and therefore contributing less to more complex thinking.

173. Students’ work is marked regularly and carefully, with comments that are helpful and constructive in all books. As a consequence, most students know the level they are working at, their strengths and weaknesses and have a good understanding of how to improve their work to achieve a higher standard.

Leadership and management

174. The curriculum is broad and well planned, giving a good range of theory and case studies. Fieldwork makes a valuable contribution to students’ achievement, which they appreciate. There are good opportunities for students to use and develop their map work skills and through these and the wide range of practical activities, students are learning to research and enquire for themselves. The leadership and management have ensured that the subject is continuing to develop. There is an accurate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and a clear vision for continuing to improve teaching. As a result, standards and teaching have improved well since the last inspection. The accommodation is unsatisfactory because there are too few spaces and the lack of blackout in two rooms makes the use of the interactive whiteboards and visual material less effective.

History

Provision in history is good.

	Year 13
Standards	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching is good reflecting the teachers’ very good subject knowledge
- Well-planned programmes of study with a clear focus on preparing students for assessment tasks
- A variety of teaching styles which build on those used at GCSE
- The department works hard to extend the range of sources available to the students
- Excellent relationships with the students
- Although results are improving, some students are not confident as independent learners

Commentary

Examination results

175. Student performance at A/S and A level over the past three years has been variable reflecting the changing size and abilities of the student cohorts. In 2004, though all the Advanced Level students achieved a pass grade but in general missed their target grade and results were below average overall. At A/S the pass rate was 95% with half of the passes being at A or B Grade.

Standards and achievement

176. Observation of lessons and scrutiny of work confirm that standards in Year 12 are higher than those of previous groups. Students have made a very effective transition from GCSE and are developing secure knowledge and understanding. This gives them the confidence to be active participants in class discussion. The A Level group has yet to benefit from measures to improve performance and students appear less confident in both subject knowledge and in expressing their ideas.

Teaching and learning

177. Staff build effectively on the approaches used at GCSE. Close attention is paid to the examination criteria. Units of work are well planned to allow students to structure their research and written work. Students are encouraged to consult a range of secondary sources and evaluate the usefulness of primary sources. Building on the literacy work in the main school, key words and issues are highlighted to equip the students with a sophisticated range of language. Paired and group work is used effectively to reinforce learning and to enable them to contribute to class discussions. For example, in a lesson on the Russian Civil War small groups presented analyses of why the Reds won and the Whites lost before returning to discuss the limitations of a map (which showed their relative positions) as a historical source. At times lessons can be too teacher focused and students do not get enough time for reflection which could allow the less vocal to secure their knowledge and ensure that lessons are not targeted at the higher attainers. Staff subject knowledge is good. Staff are making effective use of the interactive whiteboard to improve the quality of work in class although student use is still limited. Students' work is well marked with clear advice and support to aid progress. Students value the additional tutorial support given by staff outside of lessons and term time. The small area with six computers provides the potential for private study. Students value the access to the library at Wolverhampton University.

Leadership and management

178. Leadership is good. The team are aware of the need to improve attainment and have strategies in place to achieve this. The excellence of relationships with the students based on their appreciation of the teaching is reflected in the growing popularity of the subject. The team is well placed to sustain improvement.

Sociology

Provision in sociology is good.

Standards	Average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Improvement since last inspection	Not reported on

Main strengths

- Teaching is good and includes good use of ICT so students learn and achieve well
- Students' attitudes are very good and this assists learning and achievement
- Good management selects appropriate topics so students learn well

- Guidance on grades to confirm targets through marking and feedback to assist students' achievement

Commentary

Examination results

179. A Level results were well below average in 2003 and below average in 2004. Staffing issues and attendance affected the pass rate in 2004. Results are consistently higher at AS level and A level than students' expected targets suggest.

Standards and achievement

180. Current Standards in Years 12 and 13 are average and students achieve well compared with their starting point on the course and their targets. Early in Year 12, students can recognize definitions and technical terms and identify trends, for example the underachievement of boys in education. Specialist vocabulary is strongly emphasised in all lessons. For example, students understand the meaning of conjugal roles and the conflict of power and gender difference and the division of work in the home. Students discuss the change in family responsibilities in modern society well and explore the history of this change. Students' achievement results from the careful planning in the course but not enough is done to link the work of sociologists to topics and different thinking consistently to embed learning from an early stage of understanding in Year 12. Year 13 students apply their growing understanding of theorists and different perspectives to a variety of topics. This leads to well-informed discussions. They are good at organising essays and appreciate the value of planning and research. Essay conclusions are well linked to titles in Year 13 showing an improvement on the work in Year 12 when key words in titles are not so well evaluated. Students in Year 13 answer questions well and support their answers effectively with well chosen examples. Students understand how to analyse statistics, graphs and data. Feedback from marking does not keep all students aware of possible grades or help them to raise their achievement.

Teaching and learning

181. Much is achieved in lessons because a rapid pace ensures that time is well used. A very good personal understanding of the subject, and the very good use of ICT, enables teachers to use a variety of teaching methods that test students. For example, in a Year 13 lesson, students' understanding of the different achievement of gender and ethnic groups in education developed as they explored the social, moral and cultural implications of the expectations of different groups and the effect on the education system. Students have good opportunities to work collaboratively and enjoy learning this way. Teaching extends students' thinking well through questioning and discussion; this often results in good exchange of ideas but is often not probing enough for students to reach higher grades and sometimes too teacher-led. Students' attitudes to the subject are very good. They enjoy the learning environment as a supportive joint venture but not enough is expected from them to enhance their own learning through being better aware of current events and supplementing the teaching with their own internet and document-based research. Documents and handouts are not always sourced to support students' research and the requirements of coursework expected of students. Students feel that they understand how society functions and see this as a useful contribution to future careers.

Leadership and management

182. Regular attendance on examination courses helps to keep the department and students up-to-date and aware of examination requirements. Good systems of monitoring students' progress enable the teacher to identify their strengths and weaknesses and take effective action. This guides teaching and enables teachers to advise students well. The popularity of the sociology course and increased numbers has put a strain on the resources available and the library has unsatisfactory provision for the course.

TECHNOLOGY

Food technology and product design are offered at A Level.

Provision in design and technology in the sixth form is very good.

	Year 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Improvement since last inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge
- Lessons are well matched to the mature attitudes of students
- More computer aided design and manufacturing facilities are needed

Commentary

Examination results, standards and achievement

183. Students enter the sixth form with above average standards and this trend continues with results at the end of the course remaining above average. Achievement is very good with A level results in 2004 exceeding targets set. All students passed and almost two thirds achieved A to C grades.

Teaching and learning

184. Teaching and learning are very good and lessons are well structured and the style of teaching is well suited to the mature attitudes of sixth formers at this school. The specialist teachers share their expert knowledge with students who learn well in a vibrant classroom atmosphere where expectations are high.

Leadership and management

185. Leadership and management are very good. A thorough system is in place to monitor and track students' progress and one-to-one tuition ensures students know their strengths and how to improve any weaknesses to gain higher marks. Accommodation is good in food technology but not so good in design technology. However, teachers work hard to ensure this does not hinder students' progress. More ICT and computer aided design and manufacturing facilities are needed to cover the examination board requirements in the subjects. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good with more students studying design and technology and results showing a considerable improvement.

CREATIVE AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design was the focus subject and music and performing arts were sampled. In music, one Year 13 lesson was observed. The quality of teaching was good. Although standards were below average the two students achieved well. They effectively developed their aural skills and knowledge of harmonic structure of a "Gigue" by Bach because the teacher used a wide range of interesting tasks. Students were keen to learn and worked hard for their teacher. Overall it was a good lesson. Performing arts results are close to average. In the Year 13 lesson seen, a very small group of students learned well, in terms of critical analysis of performance, as a result of the teacher's skill in questioning, prompting and probing. Achievement was good.

Art and design

Provision in art and design is very good.

	Year 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Improvement since last inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve excellent examination results
- Standards of observational drawing are very high
- Very good teaching and learning
- Enrichment projects with an external gallery extend students' learning experiences
- Students do not always actively take part in group discussions and express their opinions

Commentary

Examination results

186. Results in the 2004 A level examinations were well above average, and showed improvement on the previous year. Boys and girls both achieve highly. Fewer male students take the subject than female.

Standards and achievement

187. The work of current students shows standards are above average. Most students start the course with strong GCSE results. They maintain these high standards and make very good progress. Students develop their technical skills, and observational drawing work is often excellent. They confidently use, and experiment with, a range of mixed media, including ICT, to develop their own individual styles. Students are able to evaluate their own work, and the work of others, using suitable technical and critical vocabulary. On a one-to-one basis, students are able to articulate a personal view of the subject. The study of the work of other artists, designers and cultures, both past and present, is an integral part of students' achievement.

Teaching and learning

188. Teachers have high expectations and provide a good variety of creative opportunities that interest students. Lessons are well planned, and assessment is thorough. Target setting is effective, and students know how to improve. Students' literacy skills are extended with thorough use of specialist vocabulary. An invaluable enrichment for students is the link between the department and Wolverhampton art gallery. This partnership extends students' curricular opportunities, particularly in ICT where specialists at the gallery offer a range of advanced skills. Students are currently working on glass panel designs for the gallery. They have consulted with the architect and have worked with a specialist to gain knowledge of glass engraving and sand blasting. Past students currently have work on display in a joint exhibition at the gallery. Students are well motivated and there are very good working relationships in lessons. Teachers use displays and presentations of the work of students and other artists as a basis for discussions and comparisons of techniques and approaches used. Students demonstrate exceptional draughtsmanship skills, which is a solid basis for the development of their work in other areas. Teachers encourage students to work in the department outside of timetabled lessons in private study time. They make good use of the small sixth-form art studios, working in a range of scales. In group discussion, students do not always actively participate or express their ideas and opinions in a confident manner.

Leadership and management

189. The quality of leadership and management is very good. Courses are very well managed. Students benefit from a team of enthusiastic teachers, who work very well together, and offer a wide range of skills and expertise. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. ICT opportunities have improved, and results are higher. Displays around the school reflect the very good provision in art.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

This was not a focus area. Standards were good in the one Year 12 lesson observed. The quality of teaching was satisfactory and the standards were above the national average. By the end of the lesson students could formulate appropriately phrased questions for research proposals.

BUSINESS

The school provides courses in business studies and economics. The focus subject was business studies and economics was sampled. In a Year 12 economics lesson, students demonstrated good ability to debate issues and challenge each other's views. The lesson was carefully structured to build on what they already knew and increase their understanding of the transport policy pursued by successive governments. Teaching and learning were good.

Business studies

Provision in business studies is good.

	Year 13
Standards	Average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Not reported on

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good in A and AS level and very good at AVCE
- Teachers' very good subject knowledge is shared effectively with students with a commitment to improving standards
- Students' very good attitudes make a valuable contribution to a productive learning environment
- Cramped accommodation and inadequate resources limit activities undertaken by students

Commentary

Examination results, standards and achievement

190. Standards, in 2004, in A level and AVCE courses were in line with national averages and have improved on the results gained in 2003. Standards achieved by students in AS level business were below average. Achievement is good in A and AS level and very good at AVCE level, particularly when compared to standards achieved at GCSE. Students gain good knowledge of business concepts and are able to apply them effectively to increase their understanding of business organisations and how they operate. They develop a range of investigative and presentation skills and apply them well to coursework.

Teaching and learning

191. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers share good subject knowledge effectively with students to consolidate and extend their learning. Planning is good and provides a variety of opportunities for students to develop a range of techniques and thorough knowledge and understanding of the business concepts necessary for success on their course. Cramped accommodation and inadequate resources, ICT, limits the range of learning activities that can be undertaken by students. This reduces opportunities for students to take

responsibility for the learning and become more independent learners. Students have very good attitudes and work productively in groups as seen in a Year 13 AVCE lesson where students worked effectively together on a presentation assignment. A and AS level students use case study materials well to analyse information and make appropriate business decisions. Teachers review students' work regularly and they give constructive help so they can improve their work and achieve well.

Leadership and management

192. Leadership and management of the department are good. Data are used well to monitor students' progress and attainment. The head of department is aware of its strengths and weaknesses and has procedures in place to monitor the work of the department. The departmental action plan identifies priorities but lacks specific strategies to secure improvements.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement	Sixth form grade	School grade
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school	3	3
How inclusive the school is		2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3	3
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	3	3
Overall standards achieved		3
Students' achievement	3	3
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		2
Attendance	3	3
Attitudes	2	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2	3
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		2
The quality of education provided by the school		3
The quality of teaching	3	3
How well students learn	3	3
The quality of assessment	3	3
How well the curriculum meets students needs	3	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		2
Accommodation and resources	6	6
Students' care, welfare, health and safety		2
Support, advice and guidance for students	2	2
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	3	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		3
The quality of the school's links with the community	2	2
The school's links with other schools and schools	2	2
The leadership and management of the school		3
The governance of the school	3	3
The leadership of the head teacher		2
The leadership of other key staff	3	3
The effectiveness of management	3	3

Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).